Final Federal Relief Fund

ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

QUARTER 13: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2024
OFFICE OF GRANTS & PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

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Executive Summary

The Rochester City School District (the District) received over $284 million in federal relief funds through the CARES Act, CRRSA, and ARP to address the impacts of COVID-19 on student learning, social-emotional well-being, and district operations.

These funds were strategically invested across seven key priorities:

- **Rigorous Academics and Instruction**: Curriculum enhancements, targeted interventions like i-Ready, and professional development helped address learning loss, with notable gains in reading and math.

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**: Programs like Second Step and expanded partnerships improved student behavior, peer interactions, and emotional well-being, providing essential social-emotional support.

- **Leadership and Instructional Capacity**: The Learning-Focused Leadership Program strengthened principals' ability to lead data-driven school improvement efforts.

- **Unfinished Learning**: Summer learning programs, after-school support, and tutoring helped students catch up on lost instructional time.

- **Community Collaboration**: Community schools provided families with vital services such as health care and academic support.

- **District-Wide Infrastructure**: Significant upgrades to HVAC systems, security, and technology infrastructure, including Chromebook distribution, ensured safer and more efficient learning environments.

- **Safe & Healthy Reopening**: Robust health protocols, testing, and vaccination programs facilitated the safe return to in-person learning.

The CARES Act concluded in September 2022, CRRSA ($87.5M) in September 2023, and ARP ($196.8M) in September 2024. These funds supported many key initiatives, including academics, social-emotional development, and the safety and health of students. Many of these initiatives had measurable positive impacts on student outcomes and school stability, as noted in the Research & Evaluation Compendium found in the Appendix of this report. A fiscal highlight of CRRSA and ARP administration is that the District was able to repurpose $25,953,550.60 of CRRSA funds and $41,973,713.87 of ARP funds to cover eligible expenditures in the general fund, allowing the District to build its cash reserves substantially, enhancing the District's financial health and ensuring greater long-term sustainability to navigate the future fiscal landscape.

While challenges like staffing shortages and program implementation variability arose throughout the pandemic, the District used relief funds effectively to support emerging student needs, and sustainability plans are in place to continue critical programs.

This report highlights how the District leveraged relief funds to build a more resilient and equitable educational environment for all students.

RIGOROUS ACADEMICS AND INSTRUCTION

One of the District's primary priorities was to recover academic losses caused by the pandemic. Key initiatives included:

Discovery Education Techbook: Provided supplemental instruction across K-12 classrooms, supporting both hybrid and in-person learning.

- **iReady and Amplify**: These programs targeted literacy and math recovery, with strong gains seen in schools that implemented them with fidelity. The impact of the iReady program on student outcomes has been evaluated, with significant gains identified in the *Research & Evaluation Compendium*.

- **LETRS Science of Reading**: A comprehensive professional development program designed to equip teachers with the skills needed to improve K-2 reading outcomes.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING SUPPORTS

The District invested in programs to support the emotional well-being of students, as social-emotional challenges intensified during the pandemic:

- **Second Step Curriculum**: Implemented in 39 schools to enhance students' SEL skills, helping them manage emotions and build positive relationships. The effectiveness of these SEL programs has been evaluated, highlighting improvements in student behavior, as noted in the *Research & Evaluation Compendium*.

- **Partnership with URMC**: This partnership expanded mental health services in schools, increasing the number of school-based health centers from 7 to 16.

- **Restorative Practices**: Promoted positive school climates and conflict resolution, reducing disciplinary incidents and enhancing student engagement.

LEADERSHIP AND INSTRUCTIONAL CAPACITY

To ensure strong instructional leadership and improve teaching quality, the District invested in leadership and professional development initiatives:

- **Learning-Focused Leadership Program**: In partnership with TNTP, this initiative provided principals and school leaders with training to foster data-driven decision-making and effective school leadership. This program was evaluated as part of the *Research & Evaluation Compendium*, highlighting improvements in leadership effectiveness and instructional quality.

- **Urban Teaching Fellows**: This year-long program allowed aspiring teachers to gain practical classroom experience and support from mentors, addressing ongoing staffing needs in the district. The Urban Teaching Fellows program has been evaluated for its success in supporting teacher development, with results included in the *Research & Evaluation Compendium*.

UNFINISHED LEARNING

Efforts were made to address unfinished learning caused by the pandemic, focusing on closing academic gaps and supporting students at all levels:

- **Summer Learning Programs**: Summer sessions focused on academic recovery, though evaluations showed mixed results, with some students experiencing minimal gains. The effectiveness of these programs has been assessed in the *Research & Evaluation Compendium*.

- **After-School Programming**: These programs provided additional learning opportunities to help students catch up academically, while also offering social-emotional support. Evaluations of after-school programs are included in the *Research & Evaluation Compendium*, noting both academic and social-emotional impacts.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Strong collaboration with families and community partners was essential to supporting student success:

- **Community Schools Initiative**: The District expanded its community school model to improve family engagement and access to services like after-school programs, health services, and academic support. The effectiveness of community schools in supporting family engagement and student outcomes is documented in the *Research & Evaluation Compendium*.

- **Partnerships with Local Organizations**: Collaborations with community organizations like Pathways to Peace and Ibero-American Action League enhanced student support, particularly in areas of restorative practices and conflict resolution.

DISTRICTWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE

Significant investments were made to improve school infrastructure and ensure a safe and functional environment for students and staff:

- **Building Security and HVAC Upgrades**: Funding was used to improve school safety systems and upgrade HVAC systems to ensure better air quality and safer in-person learning conditions.

- **Technology Expansion**: Chromebooks and digital learning tools were deployed to all students to support remote and hybrid learning environments.

SAFE AND HEALTHY REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

Ensuring the safe reopening of schools during the pandemic was a top priority for the District. Key actions included:

- **Health and Safety Protocols**: Implementing enhanced cleaning, social distancing, and personal protective equipment (PPE) measures to ensure a safe environment for both students and staff.

- **COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Programs**: Partnered with local health organizations to provide testing and vaccination opportunities to students, staff, and families to facilitate a safer return to in-person learning.
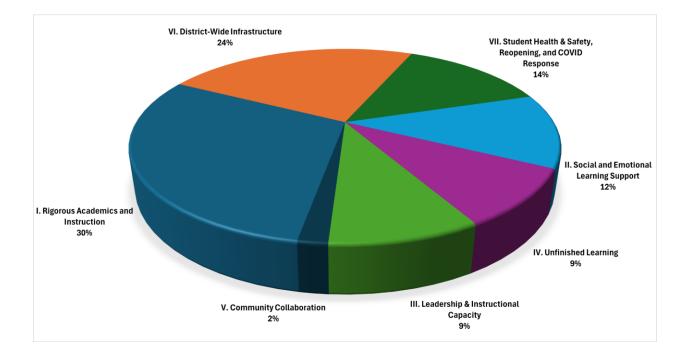
Fiscal Progress

The District successfully utilized both CRRSA and ARP funds according to federal and state guidelines, fully expending allocated funds by the respective deadlines (see below). Key financial milestones include:

- **CRRSA Act**: Fully expended by September 30, 2023, with $87,576,418 allocated and spent to support academic recovery and other operational needs.

- **ARP Act**: Fully expended by September 30, 2024, with $196,826,454 allocated and spent to support learning loss recovery, social-emotional development programs, infrastructure upgrades, and technology improvements.

This section focuses specifically on ARP spending. The budget is organized into seven key priorities, each further divided into specific initiatives that align with and support the respective priority. Below is a summary highlighting key initiatives and major programs under each priority:

Rigorous Academics and Instruction – Total: $58,857,714

- Supporting High Quality Learning Environments: A significant program is the employment of Specials Teachers for a total of $4,465,201.
- Improving Academic Programs: This includes a major investment in K-3 teachers, totaling $30,306,540.
- Promoting College & Career Readiness: Key programs include Naviance career exploration, Panorama, CTE Programs, I-Ready, and Reading interventions, costing $4,674,103.
- Building Staff Capacity for Student Success: Major initiatives include LETRS training, travel, and PICs for OPL, totaling $3,362,409.
- School Redesign and Program Diversification: This includes programs such as EL, PBL Works, Franklin Covey, and Montessori, with a total of $1,395,825.
- Building Freshman Academies: Investments in professional conferences and freshman orientation programs total $174,983.

Social and Emotional Learning Support – Total: $24,339,494

- Creating a Culture of Support: Programs include a Telehealth contract, PreK Screening, Leader in Me, LyncX, and CFY, with a total of $4,483,437.
- Supporting Equity, Inclusion & Social-Emotional Learning: Major programs include the funding of counselors, CFY, Pathways, IBERO, and ROC Rest TOAs, totaling $13,246,923.
- Supporting NorthSTAR and Responding to the Unique Needs of Students with Disabilities: A significant program is the hiring of TES paras and implementing the Sanctuary Institute, totaling $1,545,315.

Leadership & Instructional Capacity – Total: $17,972,384

- Establish Teacher Recruitment Pipelines: This includes funding for Urban Fellows tuition reimbursement, and partnerships with UofR, Nazareth, and NYU, with a total of $1,912,463.
- Recruitment & Retention Incentives for High-Need Staff: Includes incentives for RTA, SSO, paraeducators, and bus drivers, with a significant investment of $7,535,737.
- Targeted Professional Learning for Schools in Accountability Status: Programs such as TNTP, CTAC, and SAMs, with a total of $5,827,034.

Unfinished Learning – Total: $18,389,982

- Expanded Learning Before and After School: Funding for after-school and Saturday programs totals $4,766,589.
- Expanded Summer Programming: Significant investment in summer programs amounts to $9,650,471.

Community Collaboration – Total: $3,560,867

- Participatory Budgeting: A notable program includes training and hourly pay related to the participatory budgeting process, with a total of $236,110.
- Community Schools Implementation: Funding includes CSSC, CLS, and food pantries, totaling $1,656,215.
- Partnering with Communities: Programs such as digital media techs and mobile media labs are funded at $747,857.

District-Wide Infrastructure – Total: $46,690,057

- Effective Use of Federal Funds: This includes staffing and external services, with a total of $3,483,509.
- District Infrastructure Improvements: Major programs include Oracle, copiers, generator upgrades, totaling $16,925,840.
- Achieving and Maintaining Digital Equity: Investments in smart flat panel TVs, desktop computers, Chromebooks, laptops, and technicians amount to $26,208,096.

Student Health & Safety, Reopening, and COVID Response – Total: $27,015,956

- Student Health & Safety, Reopening, and COVID Response: Programs include funding for custodians, building substitutes, attendance specialists, and safety improvements such as cameras, access control, and bottle filling stations, totaling $26,581,610.

Each initiative under the priorities addresses specific needs with targeted major programs, reflecting a comprehensive approach to supporting academic programs, social-emotional learning, leadership, infrastructure, and community collaboration.

Relief Fund Program Highlights

Through program evaluation, the District has been able to highlight relief-funded programs that had the most notable impact on student outcomes.

The programs that demonstrated the most significant outcomes include:

1. **i-Ready Implementation**: The i-Ready program had a significant impact on student academic outcomes, particularly in schools that adhered to recommended usage patterns. Students with consistent i-Ready use demonstrated substantial gains in both reading and mathematics proficiency. The platform also enabled educators to tailor instruction based on specific student needs, thus supporting differentiated learning.

2. **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**: Schools that fully implemented SEL practices saw improvements in student behavior, including better peer interactions and a reduction in disruptive incidents. Professional development for teachers played a key role in successful implementation, leading to more consistent use of SEL strategies across classrooms.

3. **Building Substitute Program**: This program, designed to address the district's substitute teacher shortages, contributed to classroom stability and minimized instructional disruptions caused by teacher absences. Principals and staff noted that having a regular substitute on-site improved classroom continuity, especially during professional development days when teachers needed time away from their classes.

4. **Learning-Focused Leadership Program**: This initiative strengthened instructional leadership capacities at both school and district levels. Leaders involved in the program reported increased data-driven decision-making and improved school improvement strategies, particularly in supporting instructional quality and student outcomes.

5. **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Expansion**: The CTE programs showed increased student engagement, particularly in high-demand fields like healthcare and information technology. CTE pathways offered students hands-on learning experiences, internships, and partnerships with local industries, contributing to better alignment between education and workforce needs.

6. **Urban Teaching Fellows Program**: This program provided aspiring teachers with immersive classroom experiences and mentorship, contributing to a stronger teacher pipeline within the district. Fellows reported positive mentorship experiences and increased preparedness for full-time teaching, though some challenges related to workload and resource allocation were noted.

These programs were instrumental in addressing key areas such as academic achievement, social-emotional development, and workforce readiness within the District.

Based on the positive impact of the aforementioned programs, the District has been able to scale appropriately for continuation of prioritized programs in other funding sources. Title grants have been leveraged for the 2024-25 school year to continue providing support in reading and mathematics to students in grades K-8. Title grants are also funding continued social emotional developments strategies for students, including continuation of school counselors at the elementary schools, and continued support through Help Zones and the RocRestorative team. Finally, leadership development programs and the Urban Teacher Fellows program will continue through funding within other grants that the District has secured.

This Appendix contains summaries of large-scale programs for which comprehensive program evaluation was conducted.

2022-23 Building Substitute Program Evaluation

Overview:
The **Building Substitute Program** was launched in the 2022-23 school year as an initiative to address the persistent issue of teacher shortages within the Rochester City School District (the District). The program aimed to provide each school with a dedicated substitute teacher to cover daily unplanned absences. This approach was intended to ensure continuity in classroom instruction, reduce disruptions, and maintain a stable learning environment. Building substitutes were deployed to various classrooms within their assigned school, allowing them to become familiar with the school's culture, students, and curriculum.

Key Findings:

- The program successfully provided an average of one substitute per building each day, which helped to alleviate the stress associated with finding daily replacements for teacher absences. Principals and school staff reported that this arrangement contributed to a more predictable and stable classroom environment.
- The presence of a regular building substitute allowed teachers to take planned absences, such as professional development days, without concerns over inconsistent classroom management. As a result, schools were better equipped to provide students with a continuous learning experience.
- However, building substitutes encountered challenges in navigating the varying expectations across different classrooms. Inconsistent communication regarding classroom rules, instructional practices, and curriculum standards sometimes led to difficulties in maintaining instructional quality.
- Another notable challenge was the lack of targeted professional development for building substitutes. Many substitutes felt they needed more support in understanding grade-level standards, classroom management techniques, and instructional strategies to effectively engage students and maintain academic rigor.

Conclusions:
Overall, the Building Substitute Program demonstrated success in addressing the substitute shortage and improving classroom continuity. The consistent presence of substitutes mitigated disruptions caused by teacher absences and contributed to a more stable learning environment. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the program was limited by inconsistencies in expectations and a lack of professional development opportunities for the substitutes. These gaps suggest the need for a more structured support system to maximize the program's potential.

Recommendations:

Increase Professional Development: Provide building substitutes with regular professional development sessions focusing on classroom management, curriculum standards, and instructional strategies. This will help them adapt to different classroom settings and effectively support student learning.

1. **Standardize Expectations**: Develop a set of district-wide guidelines for building substitutes, outlining expectations for instructional practices, student behavior management, and classroom routines. This consistency can help substitutes navigate various classroom environments more confidently.
2. **Expand Program Coverage**: Consider expanding the program to additional schools, based on the positive feedback. However, any expansion should include adjustments to address the identified challenges, such as implementing a mentor system to support substitutes in their professional growth and integration into the school community.

By implementing these recommendations, the District can further enhance the Building Substitute Program's impact on classroom stability and student learning outcomes.

Overview:
The **i-Ready** assessment tool was implemented in the Rochester City School District (the District) during the 2022-23 school year as part of a district-wide effort to enhance student learning outcomes in reading and mathematics. i-Ready is an adaptive diagnostic and instructional platform designed to assess student performance, identify skill gaps, and provide personalized learning paths. This evaluation aimed to measure the program's impact on student achievement and to identify factors contributing to successful implementation across the district.

Key Findings:

● The data revealed that students with high and consistent usage of i-Ready demonstrated significant growth in both reading and math proficiency. Schools that adhered to the recommended usage patterns and maintained high implementation fidelity saw the most pronounced gains in student achievement, indicating a strong correlation between consistent use of the tool and improved academic performance.
● Teachers reported that i-Ready data was instrumental in identifying specific areas of student need. This allowed educators to tailor their instruction to address gaps in students' skills, particularly in foundational reading and math concepts. The platform's ability to adapt to each student's learning level was highlighted as a key strength, promoting differentiated instruction within the classroom.
● Despite the tool's potential, there was variability in its usage across the district. Some schools utilized i-Ready extensively, while others struggled to integrate it into their instructional routines. Inconsistencies in teacher training, time allocated for student use, and monitoring of progress contributed to varying levels of impact on student outcomes.

Conclusions:
The i-Ready program demonstrated a positive impact on student learning outcomes, particularly in schools that followed the recommended implementation practices. The ability of i-Ready to provide data-driven insights and support differentiated instruction contributed to its effectiveness. However, the variation in usage and implementation fidelity limited the tool's potential to achieve district-wide improvements in student performance. These findings suggest that a more uniform and structured approach to i-Ready implementation is necessary to maximize its benefits across all schools in the district.

Recommendations:

1. **Strengthen Support for Implementation**: Enhance ongoing teacher training focused on how to effectively integrate i-Ready data into daily instruction. Professional development should emphasize strategies for maximizing the platform's use, interpreting assessment data, and providing targeted interventions.
2. **Monitor Usage and Fidelity**: Establish district-level monitoring to ensure consistent usage of i-Ready in accordance with best practices. This includes regular check-ins with school administrators and teachers to review data reports, address challenges, and support effective program implementation.
3. **Target Additional Resources**: Identify schools with low implementation fidelity and provide targeted support, such as coaching or additional technology resources, to facilitate more consistent use of the i-Ready platform.

By addressing these areas, the district can leverage i-Ready's full potential to improve academic outcomes for all students.

Learning-Focused Leadership Evaluation

Overview:
The **Learning-Focused Leadership Program** was implemented by the Rochester City School District (the District) in partnership with The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to strengthen leadership capacities at both the school and district levels. This program, which took place during the 2022-23 school year, aimed to build instructional leadership, promote data-driven decision-making, and develop a cohesive approach to school improvement. The evaluation focused on assessing the program's impact on school leaders' practices, as well as the overall effectiveness of leadership development initiatives.

Key Findings:

- School leaders who participated in the program reported positive experiences with TNTP's professional development, particularly in areas of instructional leadership. The introduction of leadership competencies provided a standardized framework for setting expectations and assessing the effectiveness of principals and school administrators. These competencies were crucial in aligning leadership practices with the district's strategic priorities.
- Executive coaching was highlighted as a valuable component of the program. Leaders appreciated the opportunity to engage in reflective dialogue with coaches, which helped them navigate complex challenges and develop tailored solutions for their schools. This support was especially important for newer leaders who were still building their capacity for instructional leadership.
- However, the evaluation revealed inconsistencies in program implementation and participation. Some schools reported irregular participation in professional development sessions, which led to variations in the program's impact on leadership practices. Additionally, the lack of a cohesive district-wide strategy for integrating the program into existing school improvement efforts limited its overall effectiveness.

Conclusions:
The Learning-Focused Leadership Program was effective in enhancing leadership capacities and promoting data-driven practices among school leaders. The program's success was most evident in schools where leaders actively engaged in coaching and applied the leadership competencies to their work. However, the inconsistencies in implementation suggest the need for a more structured approach to ensure equitable access to leadership development across the district.

Recommendations:

1. **Expand Leadership Support**: Broaden the program to include additional on-site coaching and support for school leaders. This expansion should focus on building capacity within the district to sustain leadership development initiatives beyond the program's scope.
2. **Standardize Participation**: Develop a district-wide strategy to ensure consistent participation in professional development sessions. This could involve setting clear expectations for attendance, providing flexible scheduling, and integrating leadership development into school improvement plans.
3. **Refine Leadership Competencies**: Review and refine the leadership competencies to ensure alignment with the District's evolving strategic goals. A regular review process can help adapt the competencies to meet the changing needs of the district.

Implementing these recommendations will strengthen the impact of the Learning-Focused Leadership Program, fostering a cohesive approach to instructional leadership across the District.

Urban Teaching Fellows: Year 2 Evaluation

Overview:
The **Urban Teaching Fellows Program**, now in its second year, was implemented by the Rochester City School District (the District) to address the teacher shortage by providing year-long teaching experience for aspiring teachers. This program offers fellows an immersive classroom experience, pairing them with mentor teachers to gain hands-on training, classroom management skills, and practical knowledge. The evaluation aimed to understand the program's effectiveness, the experiences of the fellows and mentors, and areas for potential improvement.

Key Findings:

- Fellows reported that the year-long placement was highly beneficial in preparing them for full-time teaching roles. Many felt that the extended classroom exposure helped them build confidence, adapt to school routines, and practice instructional strategies, giving them a solid foundation for their future teaching careers.
- Strong relationships between fellows and mentor teachers were pivotal in the program's success. Fellows valued the mentorship, which provided personalized guidance and support. However, some mentors felt the stipends provided were insufficient for the time and effort required, indicating a need for better compensation to sustain high-quality mentorship.
- Challenges included unclear program expectations and difficulties balancing coursework with teaching responsibilities. Some fellows, particularly those pursuing special education certification, found the workload demanding. Additionally, logistical issues, such as delays in providing necessary resources (e.g., laptops, keycards), hindered fellows' ability to fully engage in classroom activities.

Conclusions:
The program has made a positive impact on teacher preparation by offering meaningful, real-world experience to aspiring educators. Fellows developed a deeper understanding of classroom dynamics, which is crucial for their success in future teaching roles. However, gaps in program structure, support, and resource allocation have limited its overall effectiveness. Addressing these areas is essential to enhance the program's value and sustainability.

Recommendations:

1. **Formalize Mentor Matching**: Implement a structured system for matching fellows with mentors before the school year starts to ensure strong rapport and effective planning.

2. **Clarify Expectations**: Develop a detailed program handbook that outlines clear expectations for both fellows and mentors, including roles, responsibilities, and timelines.
3. **Increase Stipends for Mentors**: Review the stipend structure to ensure adequate compensation for mentors' time and effort, supporting their continued commitment to the program.
4. **Streamline Resource Allocation**: Ensure that essential resources such as technology and classroom materials are provided promptly at the beginning of the school year to support fellows' full engagement in teaching activities.

Implementing these recommendations can strengthen the Urban Teaching Fellows Program, enhancing its effectiveness in preparing high-quality educators for the district.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Evaluation

Overview:
The **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Evaluation** aimed to assess the integration and impact of SEL practices within the Rochester City School District (the District). SEL focuses on developing students' social skills, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and relationship-building abilities. The evaluation examined the program's effectiveness, implementation fidelity, and its impact on student well-being, behavior, and academic outcomes during the 2022-23 school year.

Key Findings:

- Schools that fully implemented SEL practices observed noticeable improvements in student behavior, including better peer interactions, increased self-regulation, and a decline in disruptive incidents. Teachers reported that incorporating SEL strategies into daily routines positively influenced classroom dynamics and created a more supportive learning environment.
- Professional development for teachers on SEL was a significant factor in successful implementation. Educators who received comprehensive training felt more confident in applying SEL strategies, which led to more consistent practices across classrooms.
- Despite these successes, implementation gaps were identified. Not all schools integrated SEL practices uniformly, with some lagging in adopting SEL into their curricula. Limited time for SEL activities due to academic pressures and inconsistent use of SEL frameworks were cited as challenges, reducing the program's potential impact district-wide.

Conclusions:
The SEL program has made a positive impact on school climate and student behavior where it has been implemented effectively. Teachers observed that SEL contributed to stronger student-teacher relationships, enhanced classroom management, and a more inclusive school environment. However, the lack of uniform implementation and time constraints indicate that further support is needed to embed SEL into the district's educational practices comprehensively.

Recommendations:

1. **Enhance Training**: Provide additional professional development opportunities focused on SEL, particularly for schools that are behind in implementing SEL practices. This training should include practical strategies for integrating SEL into daily classroom routines.
2. **Monitor Implementation**: Establish a monitoring system to track SEL integration across all schools, identifying areas needing further support. Regular check-ins

and feedback loops with school staff can ensure that SEL practices are being applied consistently.
3. **Expand Resources**: Allocate more time and resources for SEL activities, emphasizing their importance alongside academic instruction. Collaboration with community organizations can provide supplementary support and materials to strengthen SEL initiatives.

By addressing these areas, the District can further embed SEL into the district's culture, fostering an environment that supports students' social and emotional development.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Expansion Report

Overview:
The **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Expansion Report** evaluates the growth and impact of CTE programs in the District, focusing on preparing students for post-secondary careers in fields such as health care, information technology, and skilled trades. The evaluation examined student engagement, enrollment trends, program quality, and alignment with labor market demands to assess how effectively CTE programs equip students with the skills needed for future success.

Key Findings:

- Enrollment in CTE programs has increased, particularly in high-demand sectors like health care and IT. Students enrolled in CTE pathways reported higher levels of engagement and interest in their studies compared to those in traditional academic tracks. The hands-on, experiential nature of CTE learning was highlighted as a key factor contributing to student motivation and retention.
- CTE programs that maintained strong partnerships with local businesses and industry partners offered students valuable real-world experiences, including internships, job shadowing, and career mentorships. These collaborations helped align program curricula with current workforce needs, enhancing students' career readiness.
- Despite the positive outcomes, challenges persist. Some newer CTE programs faced resource constraints, limiting their ability to provide high-quality instruction and industry-standard equipment. Additionally, there were disparities in program access, with some schools lacking robust CTE offerings, potentially affecting equity in student opportunities.

Conclusions:
The expansion of CTE programs in the District has had a positive impact on student engagement and post-secondary preparedness, particularly in sectors with high employment potential. However, to maximize the benefits of CTE, there is a need for greater resource investment, expanded partnerships, and equitable access to CTE opportunities across the district. Strengthening these areas can further enhance students' career readiness and alignment with local labor market demands.

Recommendations:

1. **Strengthen Industry Partnerships**: Expand collaborations with local businesses and industries to provide more internships, job training opportunities, and input on curriculum design, ensuring students acquire relevant skills for the workforce.
2. **Increase Funding**: Allocate additional resources to newer CTE programs to support high-quality instruction, industry-standard equipment, and up-to-date

technology. This investment will ensure that students receive a comprehensive education aligned with real-world job requirements.

3. **Ensure Equitable Access**: Expand CTE offerings to underserved schools to provide equitable access to career-focused education. Implement targeted outreach programs to inform students and families about available CTE pathways and the benefits of participating in these programs.

By implementing these strategies, the District can continue to enhance CTE programs and better prepare students for a variety of post-secondary pathways.

Summer Learning 2022: Program Evaluation

Overview:

The **Summer Learning 2022 Program Evaluation** assessed the effectiveness of the District's summer learning programs in mitigating learning loss among students. The evaluation focused on K-8 students participating in academically focused summer programs, examining their academic progress in mathematics and reading using i-Ready assessments. Additionally, the analysis explored the characteristics of the students served and the overall program cost.

Key Findings:

- **Participation**: The summer learning program enrolled over 2,000 students across 35 sites, offering a mix of academic and enrichment activities. The demographic data indicated a higher proportion of students served were Black or African American, had higher attendance rates during the program, and were more likely to have lower GPAs during the regular school year.
- **Academic Impact**: Out of 13 academically focused sites, only one (School #16) demonstrated a statistically significant positive impact on student mathematics scores. No significant improvement in reading scores was observed at any site compared to a matched group of non-participating students. Most students exhibited similar levels of summer learning loss in math and reading regardless of program participation.
- **Cost**: The average cost per student for the summer program was calculated at $1,319. Variability in cost across sites was noted, with some programs operating more efficiently than others.

Conclusions:

While the summer programs successfully engaged a substantial number of students, the overall impact on academic achievement in math and reading was minimal. The lack of measurable improvement suggests that program structure, instructional quality, or student engagement levels may not have been sufficient to combat summer learning loss effectively. The variation in cost per student further indicates potential inefficiencies in resource allocation.

Recommendations:

1. **Link Data to Programs**: Link student-level data more directly to specific summer programs to better understand which aspects are most effective and where improvements are needed.
2. **Expand Focus Beyond Academics**: Consider including non-academic outcomes, such as student engagement and social-emotional development, in future evaluations to capture the full scope of program impact.

3. **Enhance Communication**: Increase targeted communication to families about the program to boost awareness and address barriers to participation.
4. **Optimize Resource Utilization**: Investigate the cost variations across sites to identify practices at more cost-effective programs that could be replicated district-wide.

By implementing these recommendations, the District can enhance its summer learning programs to address academic gaps more effectively.

Summer Learning 2023: Program Evaluation

Overview:
The **Summer Learning 2023 Program Evaluation** assessed the effectiveness of the District's summer learning initiatives, focusing on preventing summer learning loss and supporting students' academic progress in reading and mathematics. Conducted by Gibson Consulting Group, the evaluation utilized a mixed-methods approach, including enrollment data, attendance rates, program costs, and surveys from parents, students, and staff to provide a comprehensive overview of the program's outcomes and areas for improvement.

Key Findings:

- **Enrollment and Attendance**: The program enrolled 5,884 students, of whom 14% never attended. Among participants, the average attendance rate was 68%, with significant variability across different sites (ranging from 43% to 95%). These attendance patterns suggest that engagement and program structure differed significantly between sites.
- **Cost**: The average cost per student was $1,319, with a notable range in per-day costs from $42 to $165 depending on the program site. This variation in cost efficiency highlighted potential disparities in resource allocation and program delivery.
- **Survey Feedback**: Surveys of parents, students, and staff revealed generally positive perceptions of the program's overall experience, with an appreciation for academic and enrichment activities. However, challenges were identified, including issues with communication, late delivery of materials, and inconsistent student participation, indicating areas where program implementation could be improved.
- **Academic Impact**: The evaluation found that participation in the summer program did not result in significant gains in student achievement in either math or reading. Students exhibited similar levels of summer learning loss in math whether they attended the program or not, and there was no observable improvement in reading scores compared to non-participants.

Conclusions:

While the Summer Learning 2023 Program engaged a considerable number of students and received positive feedback, it did not demonstrate a measurable impact on student academic performance in math or reading. This suggests that current program design, instructional quality, or student engagement strategies may need to be adjusted to better address learning loss and promote academic gains. Variations in cost efficiency and site-specific outcomes indicate opportunities for standardizing best practices across the district.

Recommendations:

1. **Increase Participation**: Implement strategies to improve attendance, especially at sites with higher no-show rates, through better communication, incentives, and family engagement efforts.
2. **Improve Communication**: Streamline program communication with families and staff to ensure clarity around program goals, schedules, and available resources. This includes the timely distribution of curriculum materials to support teacher preparedness.
3. **Investigate Cost Variations**: Conduct a deeper analysis of cost differences between sites to identify more efficient practices and resource allocation models that can be replicated.
4. **Align Activities with Best Practices**: Review and adjust summer learning activities to align with evidence-based best practices for instructional dosage and engagement to enhance their impact on student outcomes.

These recommendations can guide future iterations of the summer learning program to achieve more effective and equitable academic support for students across the district.

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Community Schools Implementation and Outcomes Evaluation

Overview:
The **Community Schools Implementation and Outcomes Evaluation** conducted in the 2023-24 school year aimed to assess the effectiveness of the the District's community schools strategy. Community Schools integrate academic, social, and health services to support students, families, and the broader school community. The evaluation reviewed various aspects, including student attendance, community partnerships, family engagement, and the utilization of services provided through the community school model.

Key Findings:

- **Partnerships**: the District Community Schools established 227 partnerships across 18 schools, focusing on services such as academic support, food services, health and wellness, and family engagement. The number of partnerships varied significantly between schools, highlighting diverse needs and capacities within each community.
- **Student and Family Engagement**: The programs provided essential services like food, clothing, and mental health support, benefitting both students and families. However, awareness of some services, particularly food pantries, was limited, with stigma and communication barriers cited as reasons for underutilization.
- **Attendance and Engagement**: Chronic absenteeism rates decreased in Community Schools from 2021-22 to 2022-23. Surveys indicated that both families and staff observed improvements in student attendance, behavior, and overall engagement.
- **Funding Utilization**: Expanded funding for site coordinators and supplies improved service delivery, yet several schools did not fully utilize available food pantry funds, suggesting missed opportunities for supporting student and family needs.

Conclusions:
The Community Schools strategy positively impacted student engagement, attendance, and family support, especially in schools with strong partnerships and resource integration. However, challenges in communication, service awareness, and resource utilization limit the program's overall effectiveness. Increasing awareness and optimizing resource use are critical for maximizing the community school model's benefits.

Recommendations:

1. **Increase Resource Awareness**: Implement targeted communication strategies to inform families about available resources, such as food pantries, using both traditional and direct outreach methods.

2. **Expand Delivery Services**: Introduce delivery options for food pantry services to reduce barriers such as stigma and transportation difficulties.
3. **Share Partnerships**: Encourage resource and partnership sharing across schools to maximize community support, especially in underserved areas.
4. **Capacity Building**: Explore additional staff or volunteer roles to support service delivery and enhance the overall impact of Community Schools.

These steps can help strengthen the effectiveness and reach of the Community Schools strategy, providing comprehensive support for students and families.

Data Wise Program Evaluation (2023-2024)

Overview:
The **Data Wise Program Evaluation** for the 2023-24 school year aimed to examine the impact of the Data Wise process on school-based staff within the District. Data Wise is an eight-step cyclical model designed to promote collaborative data use for continuous instructional improvement. This evaluation explored how the program affected data literacy, strategic thinking, and instructional practices among participating staff.

Key Findings:

- **Implementation**: Data Wise teams implemented the eight-step process effectively, resulting in enhanced data literacy and strategic thinking among members. However, awareness of the Data Wise initiative was limited among non-team members, with only 49% of other staff recognizing improvements in data literacy.
- **Data Literacy**: The program significantly improved data literacy for 84% of Data Wise team members, empowering them to analyze student data to inform instructional decisions. Conversely, a notable portion of school staff not directly involved in the program reported little to no change in their data practices.
- **Strategic Thinking**: Approximately 81% of Data Wise team members felt the process enhanced strategic thinking in their schools, facilitating data-driven conversations around student outcomes and instructional strategies. However, 44% of non-team members did not perceive a similar impact, highlighting a need for broader staff engagement.
- **Instructional Practices**: Data Wise positively influenced instructional practices for 75% of team members. Despite this, 52% of other school-based staff reported no impact, indicating a gap in the program's influence beyond its core participants.

Conclusions:
The Data Wise Program effectively enhanced data literacy, strategic thinking, and instructional practices among direct participants. However, its limited influence on the wider school staff suggests that while the program has potential, broader engagement and integration into daily school operations are necessary to maximize its benefits.

Recommendations:

1. **Expand Communication**: Increase communication about the Data Wise process, leveraging certified Data Wise coaches to provide professional development and align the program with existing school improvement initiatives.
2. **Align Protocols**: Adjust Data Wise protocols to integrate with current school planning and accountability structures, promoting a more seamless implementation.

3. **Dedicated Time**: Allocate dedicated time for Data Wise team meetings, ensuring that staff have the resources and support needed to effectively use data for instructional improvement.

Enhancing these aspects can improve the program's reach and effectiveness across all staff members in the District schools.

Overview:
The **ROC Urban Teaching Fellows Program** was launched by the District in the 2022-23 school year to address teacher shortages. Funded by the American Rescue Plan (ARP), the program provides aspiring teachers with a year-long, full-time teaching placement, followed by a commitment to teach for two years within the district. This evaluation assessed the program's effectiveness, focusing on fellow experiences, mentor support, and district-level implementation.

Key Findings:

- **Fellow-Mentor Relationships:** Fellows generally reported strong, supportive relationships with their mentors, which significantly impacted their readiness for full-time teaching roles. The mentorship experience was crucial in offering guidance, classroom management skills, and practical teaching strategies. However, program expectations were often unclear, creating inconsistencies in mentoring approaches.
- **Preparation and Workload:** The year-long placement was praised by fellows, as it provided a deeper immersion into classroom routines, curriculum planning, and student engagement strategies. Nonetheless, fellows found balancing coursework and teaching responsibilities challenging, especially those pursuing special education certification. This dual workload contributed to stress and burnout among some participants.
- **District Support:** Many fellows and mentors noted delays in receiving necessary resources such as laptops, access to digital tools, and building keycards. These logistical issues hindered fellows' ability to engage fully in classroom activities, limiting their effectiveness and professional growth.

Conclusions:
The ROC Urban Teaching Fellows Program showed promise in its pilot year by providing meaningful, real-world classroom experience, which helped build the confidence and preparedness of aspiring teachers. The program's emphasis on mentorship contributed to professional development, although gaps in support, unclear expectations, and logistical barriers affected its overall impact. To enhance its effectiveness, a more structured approach to program implementation is needed.

Recommendations:

1. **Formalize Mentor Matching:** Implement a structured mentor-matching process before the school year begins, ensuring compatibility and rapport-building opportunities between fellows and mentors. Clear roles and expectations should be established to enhance the mentoring experience.

2. **Clarify Program Expectations:** Develop a comprehensive program handbook outlining responsibilities, timelines, and standards for both fellows and mentors. This would create a common understanding of program goals and help fellows navigate their dual roles more effectively.
3. **Increase Stipends for Mentors:** Reassess the mentor stipend to reflect the time and effort invested in guiding fellows, fostering sustained mentor engagement and program success.
4. **Improve Resource Allocation:** Streamline the distribution of essential resources (e.g., laptops, keycards) at the program's outset, enabling fellows to fully participate in classroom activities and school operations.

By addressing these areas, the ROC Urban Teaching Fellows Program can strengthen its support for new teachers, enhance the quality of mentorship, and ensure a more successful transition to full-time teaching roles within the district.

After School Programs: Successes and Opportunities for Growth (2023-2024)

Overview:

The **After School Programs** in the District provide a range of structured academic and enrichment activities for students in grades K-12. This evaluation, conducted by Gibson Consulting Group and McREL International, aimed to assess the impact of these programs on academic performance, social-emotional learning (SEL), and student attendance. The programs, funded through CRRSA and ARP, are supported by partnerships with community organizations to address both academic and social needs.

Key Findings:

- **Program Diversity and Reach**: The programs served a diverse student population, including a high percentage of English language learners and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The quality and type of activities offered varied significantly across program sites, reflecting differences in community needs and available resources.
- **Academic Impact**: i-Ready data showed no statistically significant differences in reading and math scores between students who participated in after-school programs and those who did not. However, students enrolled in after-school programs were less likely to demonstrate no progress, indicating that while the programs may not have directly improved academic performance, they may help prevent regression.
- **Social-Emotional Outcomes**: Approximately 79% of after-school program staff reported improvements in students' social-emotional outcomes, including enhanced peer interactions, self-regulation, and confidence. This positive impact was more pronounced in programs with higher staff-to-student ratios and consistent activities that emphasized SEL.
- **Challenges**: Issues such as program disorganization, inconsistent attendance tracking, and lack of sustainable funding were identified as barriers to achieving more significant outcomes. Programs with better organization and higher-quality activities observed more positive student engagement and behavioral improvements.

Conclusions:

While the after-school programs offer valuable services and support student engagement, their academic impact appears limited. However, the positive influence on social-emotional development and prevention of academic regression is notable. To maximize the benefits of these programs, a more structured approach to program design, implementation, and tracking is needed, particularly in areas of SEL integration and resource allocation.

Recommendations:

1. **Improve Program Organization**: Develop a district-wide framework for after-school programming to ensure consistency, quality, and alignment with academic and SEL goals. This structure should include guidelines for staffing, curriculum, and activity planning.
2. **Enhance Data Tracking**: Implement a centralized data management system for monitoring student attendance, progress, and SEL outcomes. This would help identify trends, address challenges, and tailor interventions to meet student needs more effectively.
3. **Expand Professional Development**: Provide ongoing training for after-school staff to improve the quality of activities, SEL integration, and student engagement strategies. Focus on evidence-based practices that promote academic growth and social-emotional well-being.
4. **Increase Funding**: Explore additional funding sources to support program sustainability, expand high-quality activities, and improve staff-to-student ratios.

By implementing these recommendations, the District can strengthen its after-school programs to enhance both academic and social-emotional outcomes for students.

Research and evaluation processes will continue beyond federal relief funding and additional program evaluation of relief-funded programs can be viewed in the quarterly reports found HERE.