

Cohort IX/Project Dream - Lake County School District

2022-2023 EVALUATION SUMMARY

21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Grant



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Description

The Lake County School District is nestled in the middle of the Rocky Mountains, surrounded by famous resort areas such as Vail, Breckenridge, and Aspen. Lake County is considered the affordable county to live in. As such, many parents commute out of the county to work in neighboring resort communities. In any given year there are between 900-1,000 students enrolled in the school district.

The population is split about 60/40 between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking households. Project Dream through the Lake County School District encompasses After School, Friday, and Summer programs. Programs are mainly funded through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Grant Program; donations and district funds also sustain programs. After School - Project Dream takes place Monday-Thursday when school is in session after school hours. Friday - Project Dream programs take place on most Fridays throughout the school year. And Summer – Project Dream takes place over summer break in alignment with other local offerings. All programs include social-emotional learning, academic enrichment, athletics, club programs, and activities with local partner organizations. Project Dream began after school programs in 2012 in response to community need; since many families in Lake County work out of the county and therefore, need a safe place for their students to be during after school hours. Project Dream soon took on summer programming in different forms depending on the need of the school. All summer programs have an academic enrichment focus. In the fall of 2020, Lake County School District moved to a four-day week calendar. In response to this shift, Project Dream began a full day of Friday programming so students would again have a safe place to be on this day. As illustrated, Project Dream serves the community and their needs. As such, programs have consistently responded to community needs and have formed programming around those needs.

LAKE COUNTY
PANTHERS



Program Vision

Working together with community partners, we will create a healthier, safer, more prosperous Leadville where children are empowered to learn, encouraged to explore, challenged to grow, and inspired to lead.

Program Mission

LCSD challenges students to reach their fullest potential through personal, engaged and rigorous learning in the classroom and beyond. Through Project Dream we engage families, school staff, and our community to provide students with a variety of enriching activities, positive relationships in a Crew-like setting, and tools for greater social-emotional and academic success, all designed to complement the students' school day.

Program Beliefs

- We believe that LCSD can work alongside strong community partners to enrich the lives of our students.
- We believe that we can create an inclusive environment to engage and empower students and their families.
- We believe that through engagement and empowerment, we can create opportunities that enhance the experiences of students in Lake County.

Program Goals and Objectives

- **Academic Achievement:** Provide opportunities for academic enrichment to help students meet state and local academic standards.
- **Essential Skills:** Offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.

- **Commitment to School:** Support increased attendance rates and overall commitment to school.
- **Family Engagement:** Offer families of students served by opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Research Question 1: What do Lake County Intermediate School (LCIS) students most enjoy and least enjoy about Project Dream?

Research Question 2: How can we incorporate more of what students do enjoy into programs?

In order to answer Research Questions 1 & 2, the Out of School Time Director conducted focus groups with LCIS students to learn about their experiences with Project Dream and glean additional ideas from students. Focus groups were conducted with a total of seven students, five of the seven were native Spanish-speakers, two were native English-speakers. Students that participated in focus groups were in 3rd and 4th grade. For additional information on Research Question 2, the LCIS Site Supervisor, Out of School Time Director, and LCIS Principal met to discuss what would be feasible based on results from student focus groups that would align with the school day.

PROGRAM RESULTS

During focus groups a few activities were rated as most enjoyable for students. Special trips on Fridays was something that six out of seven students said they enjoyed. Among the special activities on Fridays, swimming was a favorite for

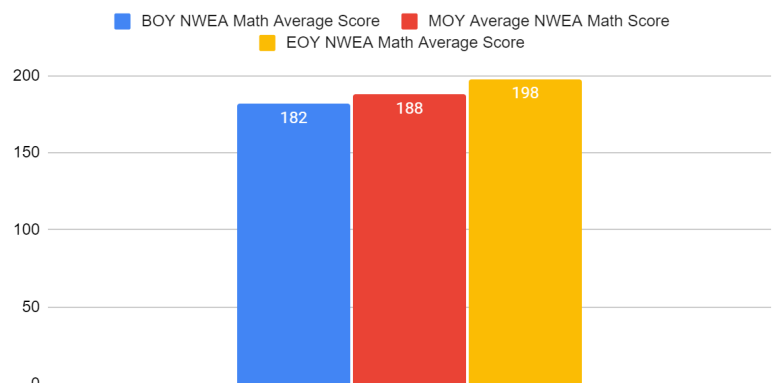
students. Students also mentioned they loved the leaders on Fridays. One student stated, *"My favorite teachers are during Project Dream because they are patient and kind."* For after school activities, Cooking and the Outdoor Club were the two favorites mentioned by students. Students said they liked Cooking Club because the leader made it a calm space, they get to make fun and yummy food, and they get to practice a skill they can use at home. The Outdoor Club was popular because students liked being outside. A number of students also mentioned they loved playing soccer which they get to do during



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Outdoor Club. Students were also asked what they least enjoyed about Project Dream. Any academic time was named as one of their least favorite things to do. On Friday mornings during the 2022-2023 school year, students participated in both literacy and math activities. During after school, students have a 45-minute chunk of homework time. Both of these academic times students said were their least favorite. Although students seem to dislike academic time; when analyzing NWEA math data for students that attended Friday programs, 36 out of 38 regular attendees or 95% improved their math score from the beginning-of-the year to the end of the year. The average growth students made over the course of the year was 16 points. Average NWEA Math scores over the course of the 2022-2023 school year can be seen in the graph. Although students tend to dislike the academic portion, there is clearly effectiveness to it.

Average NWEA Math Scores of Project Dream Participants during 2022-2023



When asked what students would like to see more of or if they had any new ideas, students mentioned they would like to have more swimming days throughout the year and more special trips like to museums or the zoo. Students also had some ideas for new after school clubs. Two ideas that seemed popular were a Chill Club where they have a choice to do spa activities like face masks or spend time drawing and reading. Another popular club idea mentioned was a Minecraft Club.

After conducting these focus groups with students, the Out of School Time Director, LCIS Site Supervisor and LCIS Principal met to discuss results and have a brainstorming session. It was discussed that some of the academic elements must remain as positive results from the data are evident. Since the after school homework time is a shorter chunk and students are completing the homework packets from their teachers, it was decided to keep that consistent and continue to work with teachers to obtain homework packets. The LCIS Site Supervisor loved some of the new after school club ideas and agreed to find staff to run a Chill Club and a Minecraft Club. Because students mentioned they really enjoyed special trips on Fridays and did not enjoy academics, the team brainstormed ways that students could have more special trips or activities that are focused on gaining life skills or experiential learning. It was decided that a workshop model would be piloted in the 2023-2024 school year. Students would be able to choose their morning and afternoon workshops for a set number of weeks that might include more trips, then switch to something else. The types of workshops would depend on the staffing and partnerships we are able to find but some ideas included: holiday baking (building on the popularity of Cooking Club), Art Show prep, woodworking, gardening, Lego Robotics, and mining. The LCIS Site Supervisor has already set about spreading the word on these workshops and trying to find people to run them.

CONCLUSION

Conducting focus groups with students is such a valuable and underutilized form of research. We can only learn so much through observation and quantitative data analysis. By talking with students and obtaining qualitative data, we are able to get a glimpse inside what they are thinking. Students also feel valued and seen when they are asked for their opinion. It is something that we do not do enough. Oftentimes as adults, we assume we know what is best for students and what they will enjoy or dislike. By providing students with an opportunity to express their voice and have autonomy over what they are doing or not doing, they become more engaged. We are excited to be able to incorporate students' ideas into programs. We are also eager to see how attendance increases when these changes are made. We will definitely keep the activities students named as their favorites, after school Cooking Club, Outdoor Club, and swim days. We will also be incorporating the new club ideas and taking out a portion of the unpopular academic time, replacing it with multi-week workshops that focus on life skills and experiential learning that incorporates special trips. Through these workshop models, we will be able to create more partnerships and work around timing that is best for partners. We hope this keeps students engaged and provides them with real-world learning experiences.

- <https://www.lakecountyschools.net/outofschoolatlcisd/>
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