

2024-2025

LEAP ACADEMY

YEAR 1 REPORT

 21st Century Grant Program

Evaluation Overview

Overview

Go Teach Consultants, LLC conducted the product/process evaluation of the LEAP Academy University Charter School 21st Century Grant project. The evaluation proceeded in an organized and systematic fashion. The evaluation addressed the annual progress of the project in achieving its stated goals and objectives. The grant evaluation was overseen by Dr. Christopher Tienken, former instructor at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, school administrator, and current Professor of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy at a NJ institution of higher education.

The report is based on data collected by the evaluator and provided by the program staff during Year 1 of the 2024-2025 school year. Note: Portions of the report are based on the availability of the data from the program. Any missing data are a result of the program not providing it as of October 25, 2025.

Design

The evaluation team used a non-experimental, cohort design, mixed methods approach with a concurrent data collection sequence for analysis of youth outcomes and progress achieving funding objectives. Random assignment of student participants was not possible in this case because one goal of the project is to include as many qualifying students and families as possible.

Progress in Achieving Funded Objectives

The ongoing nature of the project required formative feedback to the LEA Project Director to document progress and detect problems. Thus, the evaluation plan included formative and summative components. The evaluation plan provided formative feedback and a summative evaluation to monitor grant activities and refine processes.

Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation team proposed to collect qualitative and quantitative data based on the objectives of the grant. The actual data collected was predicated on the school providing access and the data. Below is what was proposed.

Objective 1.1: The grantee will establish and maintain partnerships and collaborative relationships with schools, families, youth, and the community to enhance students' access to a variety of learning opportunities.

Data Collection and Descriptive Analysis:

1. Yearly list of partnerships and collaborative relationships.
2. Yearly list of school engagement events

Objective 1.2: The grantee will adopt intentional strategies and research-based practices designed to support student skill building and mastery, both academically and from a youth development perspective.

Data Collection and Descriptive Analysis:

- (1) Yearly list of program activities that support student skill building and mastery, both academically and from a youth development perspective.

Objective 1.3: The grantee will adopt practices to support the orientation, training, and development of afterschool staff in the adoption and use of intentional strategies and research based practices to ensure program quality.

Data Collection and Descriptive Analysis:

1. List of all program staff who attended a full day training and orientation program related 21st Century Grant structures, logistics, and expectations, as measured by staff time sheets.

Objective 1.4: Students regularly participating in the program will be positively impacted in terms of performance on state assessments in language arts and mathematics.

Data Collection:

1. Assessment data from state mandated tests of mathematics and language arts for participating students

Analysis:

1. Present the percentages of students in the program scoring at or above state mandated cut-scores.

Objective 1.5: Students regularly participating in the program will demonstrate improved school-day attendance, decreased disciplinary actions or other adverse behaviors, improved social-emotional functioning, and the development of 21st century skills.

Data Collection:

- 1.School attendance records for students who participated in at least 80% of program sessions.
- 2.Discipline referral frequency data for students who attended at least 80% of program sessions.

Analysis:

- 1.Cross-reference school attendance records for students who participated in at least 80% of program sessions and calculate percentage of daily attendance and compare to the 10% threshold for the definition chronically absent students.
- 2.Cross-reference discipline referral frequency data for students who attended at least 80% of program sessions and determine the percentage of students who attain less than 10 referrals.

Objective 2.1: The agency will establish collaborative relationships that offer opportunities for literacy and related educational activities to the families of participating students.

Data Collection:

- 1.List of collaborative relationships

Analysis:

- 1.Confirm list and provide yearly comparison.

Objective 2.2: Grantees will adopt intentional strategies to communicate to parents and adult family members about program goals and objectives, activities, and their child's experience in the program.

Data Collection:

- 1.List of opportunities sent to all families of eligible students in the district.
- 2.Sign in sheets from parent/guardian information sessions.

Analysis:

- 1.Confirm dates of information to determine whether families receive monthly notices.
- 2.Confirm parent/guardian information session participation.

Objective 3.1: Throughout the grant period, the grantee will continually assess program quality and effectiveness and use this information to support quality improvement.

Data Collection:

- 1.Program staff will collect data related to the New Jersey Quality Standards for After School (NJQSA) assessment tool.

Analysis:

- 1.Annual review of data related to the New Jersey Quality Standards for After School (NJQSA) assessment tool.

Objective 3.2: The grantee will work to obtain data on students' in-school progress in the areas of academic achievement, behavior, and social development and use this information to inform the design and delivery of programming.

Data Collection:

- 1.Student scores from state mandated tests of language arts and mathematics.
- 2.Student attendance frequency.
- 3.Student behavioral referral frequency

Analysis:

1. Present the percentages of students in the program scoring at or above state mandated cut-scores.
- 2.Cross-reference school attendance records for students who participated in at least 80% of program sessions and calculate percentage of daily attendance and compare to the 10% threshold for the definition chronically absent students.
- 3.Cross-reference discipline referral frequency data for students who attended at least 80% of program sessions and determine the percentage of students who attain less than 10 referrals.

Objective 3.3: The grantee will measure the impact of the program on family members of participating students.

Data Collection:

- 1.Annual satisfaction survey sent to all parents/guardians, by the district, of participating students.

Analysis:

- 1.Calculate the percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with survey indicators of satisfaction.

Some data were not analyzed during the first year of the program due to the a lack of availability.

Overview of the Program

The LEAP Academy University Charter School extended student learning well beyond the final bell of each school day through the LEAP+ Afterschool Program, funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. The program serviced students in grades 3-12. Under the direction of Naas Yancey and his staff, the program provided safe, engaging, and worthwhile experiences to students. The supportive program environment included academic assistance via hands-on projects, mentoring, homework help, and creative thinking outlets. The focus was on the whole child and aimed to strengthen skills for school, while instilling curiosity, leadership, and positive peer relations.

The program's impact has been positive. For example, more than 80% of participants in Grades 3-12 attended at least 30 days of service and 90% in grades 3-8 completed at least 30 days. This high rate of attendance suggests a strong commitment to the program, due to comprehensive programming by the Director and staff. Students benefit from a balanced mix of structured learning opportunities and high-interest activities, including sports, media production and leadership workshops; all aimed at building competence and confidence.

Students themselves have attested to the quality of the program. From grade 3 to grade 12, students have made positive comments about the program. Whether it be opportunities to play with friends and do projects or the chance to act as a mentor for a younger student, the participants point to positive outcomes of the program. Across creative media, peer mentoring, leadership development, and athletics, LEAP+ is cultivating spaces where students can thrive and become inspired, motivated, and connected as they grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

Summer Program Overview

The summer program demonstrated robust enrollment, with 30 students from each participating grade level. Notably, the program had a wait list, suggesting high demand. The process for enrollment was strategically targeted by the Director: students in Grades 3-8 were selected at the end of the school year based on their identified need for academic support, while high school enrollment is focused on students requiring credit assistance.

Crucial to student well-being, both breakfast and lunch were served daily through a partnership with the Food Pantry of South Jersey. Academically, the program is structured to address diverse student needs. For grades 3-8, the core curriculum of the program focused on foundational skills in math and English Language Arts (ELA), supplemented by enrichment in STEM and art. The high school component is highly individualized, with students' academic schedules tailored precisely to the specific courses they need for credit recovery.

Although the core focus is academic, the program also incorporates a fun component in the form of physical education time, recognizing the importance of recreation on academic achievement. Enrichment activities are further enhanced by scheduled trips, specifically to the Franklin Institute and the Aquarium, which are open to all students through attendance for the first week.

A notable feature of the program is the inclusion of the High School Internship initiative, titled Junior Instructional Fellows. The high school students contribute meaningfully to the program by assisting within the classroom environment. To cultivate their skills, the Fellows are also required to arrive early each morning for leadership training session led by the program coordinator.

The successful integration of external resources is evident in the partnership with the Food Pantry of South Jersey for meals, and the planned educational trips, all of which contributed to a comprehensive and support summer experience for the participating students.

Results

Hours of Operation

The program operated from 3:15- 6:15 M-F and provided 164 days of service through the regular school year providing 492 hours, equivalent to an extra 75 days of schooling per year when calculating the average school day at 6.5 hours.

Program Participation

The program enrolled a total of 334 students with other students on a waiting list to gain access. Almost 80% (77.5) of the students in grades 3-12 completed at least 30 program days and 90% of the students in grades 3-8 completed at least 30 days.

Program Partners

The program partnered with the YMCA of Philadelphia (Camden), Queens Academy, and Girls on the Run to offer activities to various grade levels throughout the year.

Parent Activities

The program conducted the following parent activities during the course of the regular school year:

- Franklin Institute Field Trips
- Talent Show (Grades 3-5)
- FAFSA Night (High School)
- Daddy / Daughter Dance
- Black History Month Showcase
- Hispanic Heritage Month Parade
- STEM Invention Convention

Chronic Absenteeism

Monitoring chronic absenteeism in schools is crucial because it serves as an early warning sign for students at risk of falling behind academically, socially, and emotionally. Students who miss a significant amount of school, typically defined as missing 10% or more of the regularly scheduled school days, are less likely to meet grade-level expectations.

By tracking chronic absenteeism, educators can identify specific students and schools needing targeted intervention and support, such as connecting families with resources, addressing health and transportation issues, and implementing attendance incentives.

The results from Year 1 will be used as baseline data for future years of the program for the specific cohort of students being tracked.

Overall, the rate of chronic absenteeism remained unchanged during Year 1.

Percent Chronically Absent Comparison



Discipline

Baseline data for In-school and Out-of-School suspensions indicated that 26% of participating students were suspended in some form during Year 1, 2024-2025. The Year 1 data will be used as comparison in future years.

Academic Achievement

Baseline data for NJSLA Math and English Language Arts (ELA) were collected from the New Jersey School Performance Report for Grades 3-5, the comparison cohort for the program.

ELA:

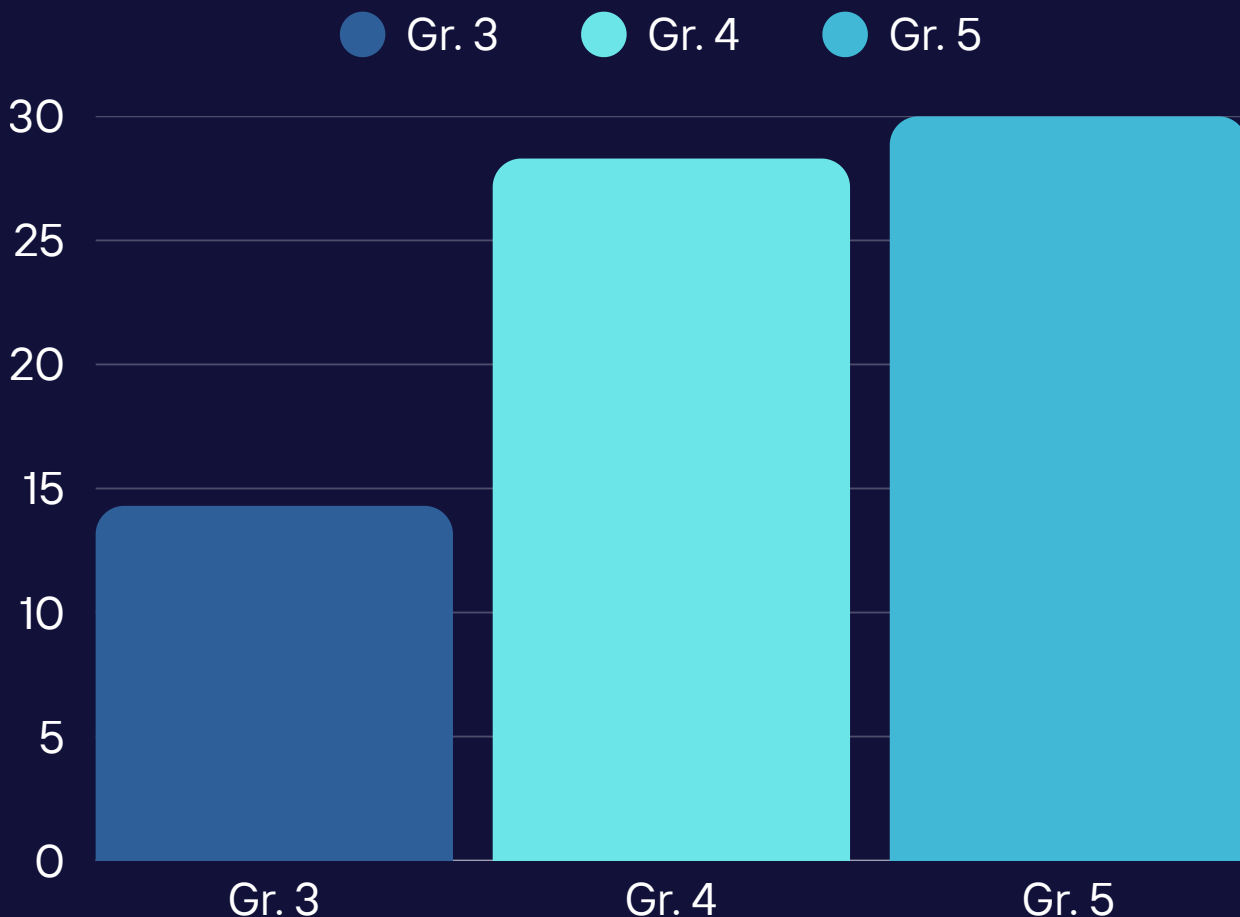
The percentages of students meeting or exceeding expectations for ELA for the baseline year (2023) were as follows:

Grade 3: 14.3

Grade 4: 28.3

Grade 5: 32.2

Baseline ELA Percentages of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations for ELA



Mathematics

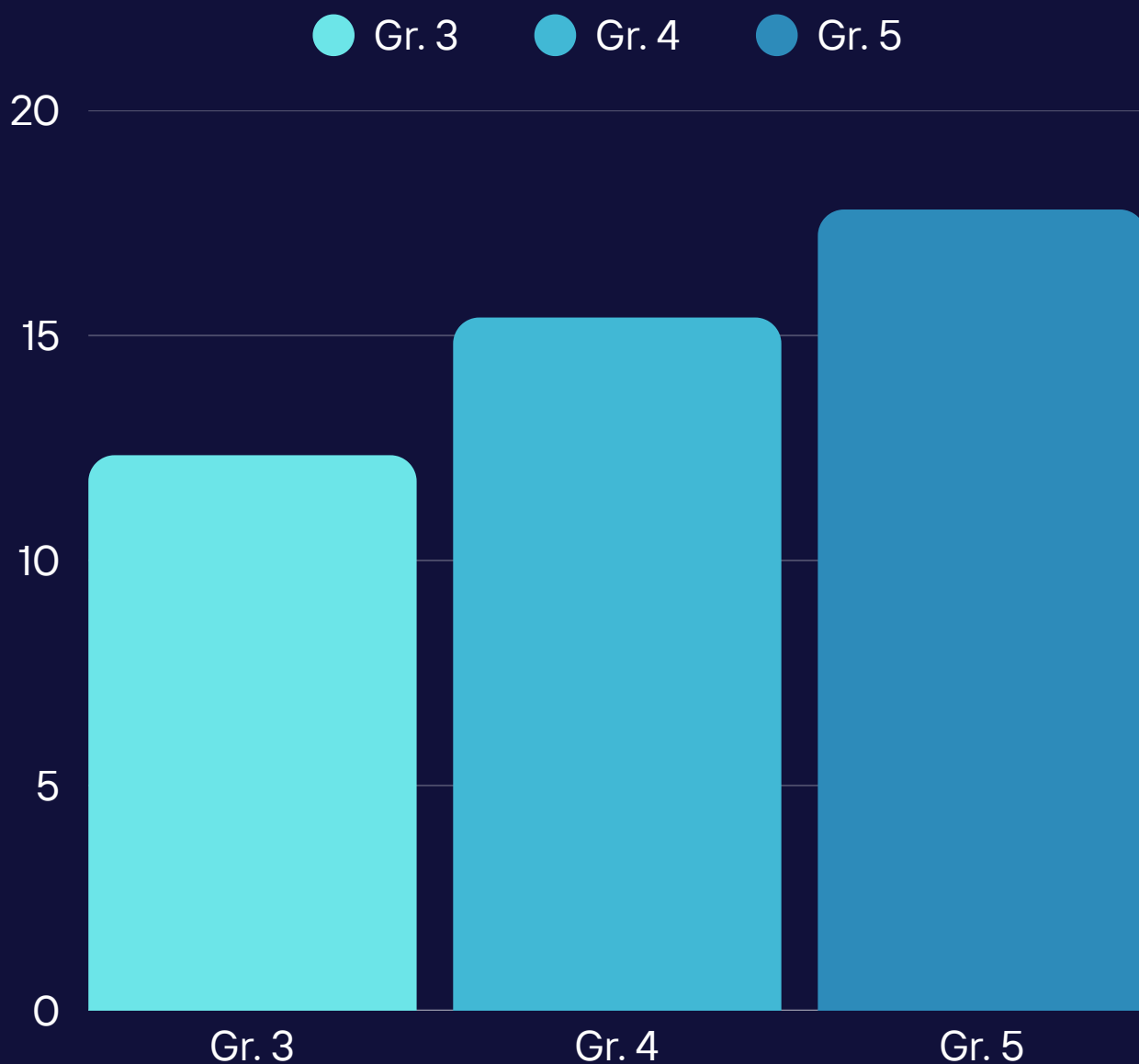
The percentages of students meeting or exceeding expectations for Math for the baseline year (2023) were as follows:

Grade 3: 12.3

Grade 4: 15.4

Grade 5: 17.8

Baseline Math Percentages of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations for Mathematics



Conclusions and Recommendations

The LEAP+ program demonstrated high levels of interest from the community, enrolling over 300 students during Year 1, with a waitlist of families. The Program Director, Mr. Yancey, is commended on implementing effective enrollment practices.

Student and parent/caregiver satisfaction appears to be high based on focus group interviews conducted by Mr. Yancey and informal conversations with students conducted by the Evaluation Team during visitations. Mr. Yancey and his staff are commended for providing a program that is appreciated by the participants.

The reorganization of the grade levels conducted by Mr. Yancey at the beginning of the program cycle helped to better organize the students for effective supervision and provided more opportunities for staff collaboration. The reorganization also provided for more effective placement of resources .

Student satisfaction with the program is high. During on-site visitations by the Evaluation Team, students indicated high levels of enjoyment with the program. They appreciated the opportunities to receive academic assistance, interact with friends, and spend time outside and doing art and other creative projects.

The program should continue to conduct focus group interviews with parents/caregivers and students. It is recommended that the program institute a formal online satisfaction survey to reach a larger group of parents and caregivers.

The program should continue the process it uses for recruitment to keep the number of participating students high. The program is clearly beneficial to the students and families.