

Colorado AeroLab Evaluation 2018-19

During the first year of programming, the 5th Day model proved to be a challenging and highly successful concept. Superintendents and building leaders at all participating districts were eager for their students to have additional learning opportunities and remained supportive throughout the year. Instructors showed deep dedication and commitment to students and developed new expertise by teaching content outside their regular courses. Parents became more engaged in their children’s schools and many community members participated in one or more 5th Day activities presented throughout the year. All are excitedly anticipating Year 2.

These program evaluation measures and tools were presented in the RFP.

CAL 5th Day Program Evaluation Measures and Tools

Area of Measurement	Groups/Persons Responsible for Assessment	Measurement Tools and Rubrics	Benchmark Timeline
Program Context	CAL Support Staff	Tools to be created by CAL Support Staff	End of Semester Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys
Effect on Socialization and Resilience			Ongoing with Instructor/Student coaching and Student Self-Reflection
Relationships with Peers			
Planning a Successful Future (ICAP connection)	CAL Instructional and Support Staff in partnership with District personnel	Tools to be created by CAL Support Staff in partnership with District personnel	Interim check-in at mid-year
Student SMART Goals			
Avoiding At-Risk Behaviors	CAL Instructional Staff	Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors Survey ¹	Ongoing with Instructor/Student coaching and Student Self-Reflection
Grit and Growth Mindset Scores	CAL Instructional Staff	Assessment tools created by Angela Duckworth ² and Carol Dweck ³	Beginning and End of Academic Year
Essential Skills Micro-credentials	CAL Instructional and Support Staff	Tools to be created by CAL Support Staff in partnership with CDE, Colorado Workforce Development Council and others	Ongoing with formal awards given End of Academic Year
Capstone Projects			
Endorsed Diplomas			

¹ *Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors Survey*: <https://www.search-institute.org/surveys/choosing-a-survey/ab/>

² *Angela Duckworth’s Grit Scale*: <https://angeladuckworth.com/>

³ *Mindset Works*: <https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/> and *Carol Dweck’s Mindset Scale*: <https://www.mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/step1.php>

Where necessary, the CAL Support Staff created tools to evaluate the work at the learning centers. Given their extensive professional background in education, Support Staff members are highly qualified and deeply experienced to conduct the evaluation activities, tabulate and analyze the data. They are currently looking at this data to construct an objective interpretation of the 5th Day program to inform strategic planning for Year 2. Qualitative as well as quantitative data will be considered in all areas including staffing, financial and center expansion decision-making. The CAL Support Staff, instructors and Board of Directors will review all the collected data. Course corrections and curriculum adjustments will be aligned with the CAL strategic vision and planning processes.

Highlights Summary

Students

- 212 middle school and high school students enrolled during SY 2018-19 across 4 learning center sites
- 130 regular attendees, i.e., participated in 30 or more 5th Day program days
- Extended learning opportunities in design thinking, problem-based learning, social impact projects, teambuilding, social-emotional learning, character and leadership development, growth mindset and more through projects in robotics, logical thought processes, engineering design, 3D modeling and printing and Essential Skills building activities.

Parents

- Increased engagement at their children's schools including Science Night and educational documentary film screenings
- Strong connection to 5th Day activities via Colorado AeroLab weekly newsletter
- Connecting with other parents on important topics such as mental health and depression among teens, adolescent growth and development, strategies for dealing with addiction to technology, video games and social media
- Greater understanding of the future of work and career options for young people, how to plan course loads to meet career goals, and the benefits of project-based learning in education

Teachers

- Countless hours of personal professional development outside regular content area of instruction
- Built stronger relationships with students
- More involvement in community life at school
- Growing personal satisfaction with teaching profession
- 100% 5th Day teacher retention

Successes and Highlights

- 5th Day program named one of Colorado's most innovative education programs by Colorado Education Initiative
- 5th Day students selected to participate in the Colorado Youth Activation Lab in Denver in March 2019
- 2000+ hours of 5th Day programming
- 60,000+ contact hours with middle school and high school students

External Evaluator

CAL has established a strong partnership with the Colorado Northwest Board of Cooperative Education Services (NW BOCES) and gained the interest and support of district leaders in this region of the state. NW BOCES maintains a high-level working knowledge of the overall CAL program; however, they have not been intimately involved in a ground-level experience with students, families and communities. They are in a strong position to offer an objective external evaluation of the CAL program centers.

The originally proposed grant budget included a funding request to hire an external evaluator to perform evaluations and audits according to the State Level Evaluation requirements. CAL had planned to contract with NW BOCES staff to complete an external evaluation, enlisting the services of its education experts to surface successes and pain points, name stakeholder issues, and provide insight and direction for program improvement.

When the grant period began in July 2018, the confusion and chaos related to receiving the Grant Award Letters, getting contracts signed and final budgets completed caused a two-month delay in the start of all 5th Day programs. Due to several mistakes in the contract details, multiple iterations of CDE documents were exchanged between the Grants Fiscal Office and CAL, which affected everything including hiring instructors, purchasing supplies and materials, paying staff and beginning programming.

In the rush to sign documents, receive the official GAL, meet the RFF deadlines and start student programs, no one noticed that the budget line for the external evaluator was missing. In the translation of the old Excel budget spreadsheet to the newer version, the GFO did not copy over that expense, and so there was no funding for an external evaluator. At that point, all the contracts had been signed and the GFO would not make any adjustment to include additional funds in the GAL. As a result, evaluations were completed by the Support Staff.

Evaluation Measures

Program Context, Effect on Socialization and Resilience, and Relationships with Peers

Throughout the year, the Program Director was present at each learning center at least twice per month. This provided firsthand experience and observation of how the instructors interacted with students, how students received the content and persevered through difficulty or challenge, how students interacted with peers and the overall context of the 5th Day programs.

At the end of the year, students completed a self-reflection survey capturing their thoughts on the 5th Day program at large, where they experienced success, what challenged them to grow and what they want to see in future 5th Day programs. A summary of their reflections highlights the success of Year 1.

- 90% of students shared that 5th Day had a strong, positive impact for them personally.
- 75% improved relationships with their teachers, particularly the 5th Day instructors.
- 80% said participation in 5th Day made them more excited to be in school and that it helped them do better on attendance and homework.

Instructors reported these reflections were accurate and that they saw improvement in the regular classroom regarding behaviors, participation, homework completion and attendance.

Planning a Successful Future and Student SMART Goals

As described above, the delayed start in the Fall pre-empted capacity and time for both the Instructional and Support staff to fully implement this piece and coordinate with school personnel. Several of the first 5th Day activities with students focused on goals and planning for the future, using career exploration and research to expose students to wider options than what they know in their small towns. Small and large group discussions revealed that students are genuinely interested, and even deeply concerned, about what they will do after high school.

Instructors shared their students' thoughts and comments throughout the year. Many students expressed fears about leaving their small rural communities for college or vocational schools given they have spent their whole academic lives with the same classmates. Others shared concern about leaving their hometowns because there are not enough well-paying jobs. Almost all said they are not truly confident they will be ready for college or work after high school graduation. All these reflections have been included in planning for next year.

A priority goal for Year 2 is to work more directly with school counselors to help them connect ICAP plans and student SMART goals with 5th Day activities. CAL is in a unique position to supplement and complement social-emotional learning and Essential Skills building.

Avoiding At-Risk Behaviors

Few of the instructors were familiar with the Search Institute's *40 Developmental Assets* and none had ever done the Attitudes and Behaviors survey. They are all well-versed in identifying and handling behavior issues in the classroom, connect regularly with parents when needed to help students succeed academically and each have years of experience and expertise with all types of adolescent issues. The CAL Instructional Staff is a group of exceptional teachers who consistently receive strong evaluations from their building leaders.

High quality teaching staff and lack of familiarity with this resource contributed to the decision to prioritize other areas of professional development for Year 1. Project-based learning, design thinking, and learning new STEM content were the most important training needs to begin 5th Day on a strong foundation. The Attitudes and Behaviors survey will be conducted in Year 2.

Grit and Growth Mindset Scores

The North Park and Soroco districts have integrated various types of grit and growth mindset programs into their schools in recent years. This is a new concept for the West Grand district.

This was a challenging concept to address in 5th Day since the districts are all in distinctly different stages of development with these ideas. As a team, we did not want to introduce new language or thoughts that would confuse students, and we also did not want to give the appearance of competing with the work of school leaders already in place. The Program Director needed firsthand experience and observation to learn more about the attitudes and approaches unique to each district.

Ultimately, the decision to postpone completing the Grit and Growth Mindset scales was a wise choice. This allowed more time for CAL instructors to introduce the words and help students relate the ideas to their schoolwork and everyday life situations. In previous school settings, the CAL staff has witnessed the powerful transformation these units of study can initiate to empower and invest young people in their own education. These pre- and post-surveys will be conducted during Year 2.

Essential Skills Microcredentials, Capstone Projects and Endorsed Diplomas

The partnering school districts are all at very different stages of development with these measurements as well, mostly related to their work in establishing their graduation guidelines in alignment with the CDE menu of options.

North Park has a very robust Capstone program where all high school students are required to complete and present a project to receive a diploma. They do not have anything in place for microcredentials or endorsed diplomas.

Soroco High School has very specific outlines of options for graduation guidelines, including a series of college and career pathways that allows students to earn concurrent enrollment credit, industry certificates and Associates degrees in a variety of content areas. Some pathways require Capstone projects to demonstrate learning and some simply require the appropriate SAT or other test scores. They do not have anything in place for microcredentials and are not very interested in pursuing endorsed diplomas.

West Grand is working to rewrite and formalize graduation requirements to align with the CDE menu of options, however, they are at least a school year away from officially adopting a policy. The superintendent is planning to create a Capstone program, but they do not have anything in place for microcredentials or endorsed diplomas.

When CAL originally proposed the project to superintendents to write the RFP, conversations with district leaders about students earning these credentials in the 5th Day program was strong and positive, leaving the impression that it was simply a matter of documenting the details. Further discussion of the contexts at each district throughout the year have shown these to be much more complex issues requiring larger collaboration with local school boards. None of the districts are ready today to award any credential, though a year's worth of discussion has begun to pave a solid path.

A priority goal for Year 2 is to continue these conversations and help district leaders craft policies to make these valuable credentials available to their students. These credentials will uniquely set rural students apart from their metro-Denver and Front Range counterparts, so this is a vital goal that CAL will continue to pursue.

Data for Continuous Improvement

Key metrics to show continuous improvement are increased attendance at CAL and in the regular school day; greater homework completion rates; more parent engagement and involvement with their children; and decreased discipline referrals and behavior issues. The CAL Program Director regularly met with school district personnel throughout the year to review and address these concerns. Regular attendance at 5th Day programs gave students a more direct and positive experience of school which translated into improved participation during the regular school day.

The CAL 5th Day model is an innovative and new approach to traditional public-school education. Years ago, many of the partnering districts voted to move to 4-day school weeks with the intention of offering 5th Day-like programs, however that never happened. School leaders and parents are very appreciative and supportive of CAL for providing these activities to fill this gap for students.

CAL is keenly focused on continuous improvement to build long-term sustainability, adjusting and adapting curriculum, programming and structure as evaluation results will reveal. Moving into Year 2, CAL has created new activities to focus more directly on work-based learning and career exploration for high school students to strengthen postsecondary workforce readiness.

Colorado AeroLab 5th Day

2018-19 EOY Report

Colorado AeroLab established four 21st Century Community Learning Centers in the small rural school districts of northwestern Colorado at North Park R-1 in Walden, South Routt RE-3 in Oak Creek and West Grand 1-JT in Kremmling. Each site was funded by the 21CCLC grant and served students and families in these communities. Below is a summary view of all the 5th Day programs.

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