

21st Century Community Learning Centers

Accelerating Learning. Supporting Families. Earning Results.

Introduction

Afterschool programs inspire kids to learn, help them build foundational skills like the ability to communicate effectively and think critically, and give parents peace of mind knowing that their child is in a safe space with caring adults.

Before, during, and now post-pandemic, 21st Century Community Learning Centers are helping young people academically and socially and meeting the needs of families nationwide. But the demand for these programs far exceeds the supply. Nearly **25 million children are not in an afterschool program**, but would be if a program were available to them.¹

21st Century Community Learning Centers provide afterschool and summer learning opportunities in every state. Programs are selected for funding based on their ability to meet the needs of students and families and their connection to education priorities in the state. However, **only 1 in 3 funding requests are awarded** due to intense competition and lack of adequate federal funding.



2023 marks the 25th anniversary of funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Although 21st CCLC was introduced into Congress in 1994, the first discretionary grant was not administered until 1998. In 2002, the funding transitioned into a state-run competition, which now supports programming at more than 10,600 centers serving nearly 1 million children. To learn more about the history of 21st CCLC, read the issue brief, "[Two Decades of 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Providing afterschool and summer opportunities to millions of young people and families.](#)"

THESE COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS PROVIDE:²



opportunities for new, hands-on, academically enriching learning experiences to meet the challenging state academic standards;



a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, focusing on subjects like science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), physical fitness and wellness, drug and violence prevention, nutrition and health education, service learning, youth development, and arts and music;



activities that tie into in-demand industry sectors or occupations that are designed to reinforce and complement the academic program of participating students, including, but not limited to, financial and environmental literacy, career readiness, internships, and apprenticeships; and



families of students with opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development.



The after school program benefits kids in many ways. It helps them academically since they get additional small group instruction throughout the week. It also helps them socially as they have more opportunities to interact with peers in a variety of social settings."

—IOWA 21ST CCLC TEACHER



Strong Results

Having afterschool choices helps students learn and grow, helps parents balance work and life, and helps employers hire the local workforce they need in the present and the future. Afterschool and summer learning programs focus on the whole child, engaging students in enriching learning experiences that will help them reach their full potential.

SUPPORTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS

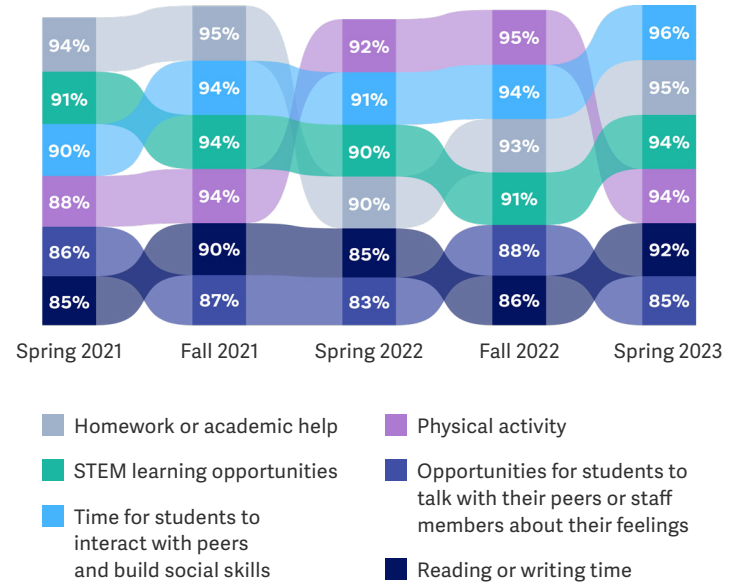
- Statewide evaluations of 21st CCLC programs have found a positive impact on student engagement and motivation in school, with gains seen across grade levels, from elementary to high school.³
- Students who regularly participate in Community Learning Centers improved their school attendance, school engagement, health-related behaviors, and math and reading achievement.⁴
- Regular participation in afterschool programs helped narrow the achievement gap between high- and low-income students in math, improved academic and behavioral outcomes, and reduced school absences.⁵

SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

- Businesses want to hire problem solvers and team players. Students learn by doing in afterschool programs and develop the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.
- Students regularly participating in 21st CCLC programs see gains in skills and competencies valued by employers, such as the ability to communicate well, collaborate with others, and think critically.³
- Jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math are driving global economic growth. Approximately 5.7 million students are getting opportunities to develop an interest and explore STEM in afterschool.⁶
- More than 5 in 6 parents with a child in an afterschool program agree that programs allow them to keep their job or work more hours.¹

A KEY TO RECOVERY⁷

During this time of recovery, Community Learning Centers are providing students critical supports—from accelerating their academic growth to connecting them with caring adults and mentors.



Driven by Local Needs

21st Century Community Learning Centers work closely with schools, youth and community groups, faith-based organizations, and businesses. Each program is shaped by the local community to best meet the needs of the people and organizations it serves. Grantees have an average of 9 partner organizations.⁸ A typical program receives \$67,000 from partners.⁹

Between 2006 and 2010, partners contributed more than \$1 billion.

“Being a part of a community of people who share similar likes is a good feeling. You get a chance to meet people outside of your own grade level and learn what you might want to do in the future after learning a new skill.”

—WASHINGTON STATE 21ST CCLC STUDENT

Community Learning Centers by the Numbers

21st Century Community Learning Centers provide essential support to students, many of whom are from underserved communities, and offer creative, engaging learning opportunities to kids of all ages and backgrounds.

As expected, the overall number of students served during the pandemic decreased, due in part to hybrid and remote learning and new health guidance for in-person operations such as smaller staff-to-student ratios and additional health and safety protocols.¹⁰ However, it is worthwhile to note that percentage of students served from low-income families, English language learners, and students with special needs increased. Regarding program location, Community Learning Centers continue to be primarily located in school districts. The next most common providers are community-based organizations, which includes faith-based organizations.

	PRE-COVID 2019-2020 SY	COVID 2020-2021 SY
STUDENTS SERVED		
Total students	1,564,438	964,661
African American/Black	22%	20%
Asian American or Pacific Islander	4%	4%
Hispanic/Latino	39%	38%
Native American	3%	3%
White	25%	29%
Pre-K–5 th grade	49%	52%
6 th –12 th grade	52%	48%
Participate in the federal free or reduced price lunch program	66%	69%
English language learners	13%	15%
Students with special needs	10%	13%
ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS		
Total family members	290,080	200,786
CENTERS		
Total centers	10,496	10,652
School districts	83%	82%
Community-based organizations (including faith-based organizations)	10%	11%
Colleges, universities, charter schools, or other organizations	7%	7%
STAFF PROFILE		
Total staff	127,066	96,333
Paid staff	80%	88%
Volunteers	20%	12%
School-day teachers	35%	37%
College students	9%	8%
Community partners	32%	31%

Regular attendance produces greater gains

A large-scale study of approximately 3,000 low-income, ethnically diverse elementary and middle school students found that those who regularly attended high-quality programs (including Community Learning Centers) for more than two years gained up to 20 percentiles in standardized math test scores compared with peers who were routinely unsupervised during the afterschool hours. Students with lower program attendance gained 12 percentiles compared with their non-participating peers.¹¹

Students regularly attending Community Learning Centers see academic and behavioral gains, and based on data from the 2020-21 school year, students in Community Learning Centers continued to show improvements in their ability to complete homework, classroom participation and behavior, and math and Language Arts grades.¹⁰

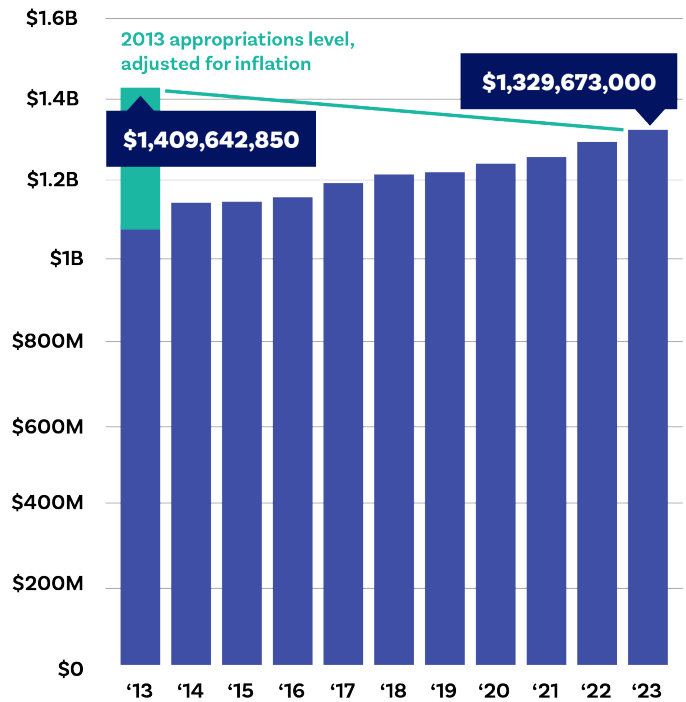
	PRE-COVID 2019-2020 SY	COVID 2020-2021 SY
PERCENTAGE OF REGULARLY ATTENDING STUDENTS IMPROVING THEIR:		
Homework completion and class participation	70%	69%
Behavior in class	63%	64%
Math grade	50%	48%
Language Arts grade	52%	48%

Funding and Unmet Demand

A fall 2022 survey found that 85% of parents agreed that afterschool and summer programs are an absolute necessity for their community and 88% would like their federal, state, and local leaders to provide more funding to afterschool programs.¹²

Although the funding for afterschool and summer programs that is available through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) is a clear acknowledgment of the valuable role that programs play for kids, families, and communities, it will soon run out. A recent survey has also found that a limited number of afterschool and summer program providers have been able to access ARP funds—less than 1 in 5 afterschool and summer program providers report COVID-relief funds as a current source of funding.⁷ Additionally, the public investment in 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the only sustained federal funding dedicated to afterschool and summer, has **LARGELY STALLED** and has not kept up with the **COST OF INFLATION, WHICH HAS INCREASED 29% OVER THE PAST DECADE**. After adjusting for inflation, the current funding level is approximately \$80 million below the 2013 level.¹³

FUNDING FOR 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS



Only **1 IN 3** requests for funding Community Learning Centers is awarded. Over the span of 10 years, **\$4 BILLION** in local grant requests were denied because of intense competition and lack of adequate federal funding.¹⁴

Afterschool is a smart investment in our children's future

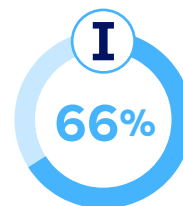
EVERY \$1 INVESTED IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SAVES \$3 BY¹⁵

- ✓ Increasing kids' earning potential
- ✓ Improving kids' performance at school
- ✓ Reducing crime and welfare costs

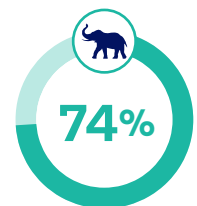
SUPPORT FOR INCREASED PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IS STRONG AND BIPARTISAN¹²



Democrats



Independents



Republicans

Sources

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