



Lathrop After The Bell

Fairbanks, Alaska

115

Average number of students served during the school year

82%

Students from low-income families

Main funding sources:

- ▶ 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Lathrop After the Bell

Programs engage older youth

While many people typically think of afterschool programs for elementary aged students, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) serve older youth as well. Providing unique opportunities such as credit recovery programs, internship opportunities, 21st century skills building and job training, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) focused enrichment courses, these programs support college and career readiness for high school students across the country. Through these opportunities, 21st CCLC can help build connections with local universities, businesses, and community mentors for our country's youth and help build a robust economy and strong workforce moving forward.

Overview

Lathrop After the Bell serves 115 students in grades 9-12, with a primary focus on 9th grade to ensure students start off high school on track to graduate on time. Through credit attainment, academic supports, and study skills development, the program helps 9th grade students in their transition to high school and earn the necessary credits in their first year. Additionally, Lathrop After the Bell supports college and career readiness by providing various opportunities for youth to connect and engage with local businesses and community mentors, take part in enrichment courses focusing on science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM), and practice interviewing techniques and resume writing.

A typical day

Lathrop After the Bell operates Monday through Thursday for two hours after the school day ends. Students' daily schedules are primarily youth-driven, as the program gives them the flexibility to decide what it is they need to work on that day. In those two hours, students can get a snack, receive homework help, access academic support in a specific subject area, work on college and career preparation, or participate in a variety of enrichment activities, including weight lifting, chess club, theater, journalism, and robotics. All students have check-ins in regards to their grades, attendance, and social and emotional learning needs, which also helps determine what they should focus on each day.

Outcomes

Data is an important component to the success of Lathrop After the Bell and their continuous program improvement. By showing positive student outcomes, the program has been able to secure additional funding from the school district outside of their 21st CCLC fund and rally greater public support. Data from a 2019 external evaluation report shows that more than half of students who regularly participate in the program improved on state assessments in math (51 percent) and reading (59 percent), and among those who had below-average school day attendance rates the prior year, 57 percent increased their school day attendance.

Program characteristics

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District found that students in their district who fell behind their first year of high school were less likely to graduate on time. As a result, Lathrop After the Bell focuses their support primarily on 9th grade students. Program staff assist freshmen in developing effective study skills and organization and time management techniques as they transition to their new classes, increased homework demands and expectations, and additional social and athletic commitments that high school brings.

Students also receive tutoring, test preparation and homework help, and other academic supports. In the program's efforts to facilitate on-time graduation, freshmen have the opportunity to earn an additional school credit in "success skills" by regularly attending and participating in the program.

Lathrop After the Bell also offers unique college and career readiness programming, including a variety of STEAM-based enrichment courses that help build useful 21st century skills in in-demand fields. As part of their workforce development curriculum, the program provides "LAB" time for students to receive help in developing resumes, filling out job applications, practicing interview skills, and applying for colleges, tech, or trade schools with help from their school counselors and counseling technicians. A key component of the program is incorporating student interests and passions into the curriculum, such as



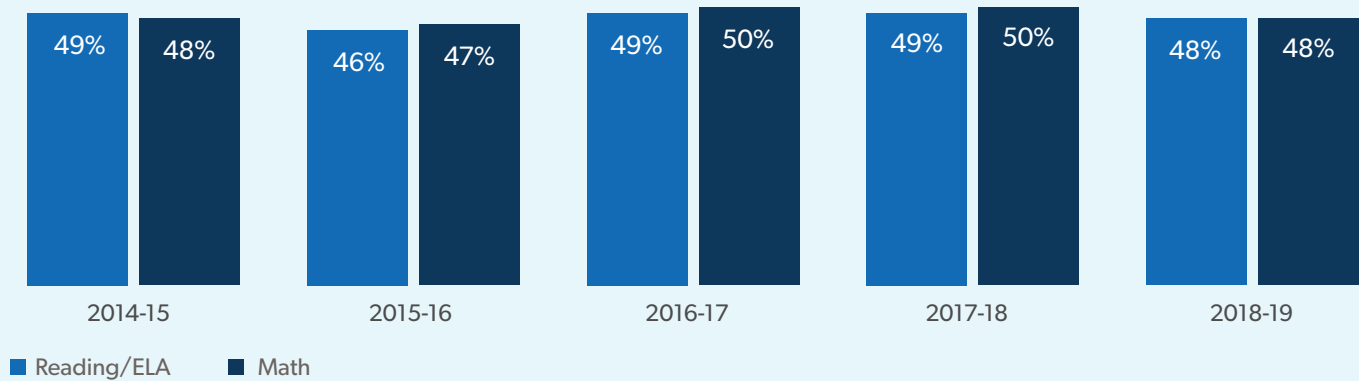
21st Century Community Learning Centers

21st CCLC is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to supporting local afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs. Since its inception in 1994, the program has supported school and community based organization partnerships that provide a safe and supervised environment for youth, while inspiring students to learn through hands-on learning and other enrichment activities, find new areas of interest, and connect with positive adult mentors, as well as providing supports to their families. Today, 21st CCLC programs serve students attending high-poverty, low-performing schools.

Read [Two Decades of 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Providing afterschool and summer opportunities to millions of young people and families](#) to learn more.

Department of Education annual performance reports have shown students in 21st CCLC programs are making consistent gains in math and reading

% of regularly attending 21st CCLC students improving in their math or reading grades



woodworking, robotics, and cooking. Leaders are brought in from various fields to support these different interests, and offer a variety of opportunities for students to engage with local businesses. For example, their local Delta GEMS group, a program of the Delta Sigma Theta Service Sorority, exposes young women to diverse career and educational options through weekly workshops with bankers, teachers, principals, accountants, nurses, social workers, a military family specialist, and a local assembly woman, and connects them with mentors in these fields. They also offer their Future Teachers of America program, in which high school students teach and mentor local elementary school students to prepare for a career in education and promote diversity in hiring and recruiting teachers of color. Finally, with trade jobs in demand in Alaska, a variety of tradespeople have come in to discuss welding, equipment operation, carpentry, and other career options. This opportunity for Lathrop After the Bell students, which provides career exposure and connections, has resulted in several job placements a year.

Program history

Lathrop After the Bell first began in the 2004-05 school year. At the time, a few elementary community learning centers were operating in the district; however, because priority points were awarded in Alaska for secondary school programming, the district expanded programming and brought on middle and high school programs that year. Staff during the first year of the program had to learn what it took to attract and retain older students, and balancing teacher needs with what students wanted to see in the program. The program has since become an engaging and productive space for older students to explore their interests, receive homework and academic supports, and get help with college applications and career planning and preparation.

Recommendations

for programs engaging older youth:

- ▶ Involve stakeholders early and often. 21st CCLC are community programs, and involving the community is important in ensuring you're meeting their needs.
- ▶ Don't just focus on the likely fits, but think outside the box with partnerships that can help support student growth.
- ▶ Relationship building with students is key in developing a successful and engaging high school curriculum that students want to participate in.