



Credit: Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

# This is Afterschool in Alabama

In Alabama, Autauga County Schools dedicated approximately \$2.5 million in American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds toward its afterschool and summer programming, which included tutoring after school for its students in K-12, and for the first time, offering a full-day comprehensive summer program during June 2023. In partnership with its local YMCA, the district offered the summer program to 200 students, providing academic classes with school-day teachers in the morning and transitioning to the YMCA in the afternoon, where students took part in enrichment activities, such as art, dance, music, swimming, and karate. For students attending rurally located schools, transportation was provided to the summer program and back to the school. Across the four sites hosting programs, the average attendance rate was nearly 80%, which the district largely attributed to its partnership with the YMCA. While the district plans the same level of programming for the 2024 summer, it is uncertain about future summers as ARP ESSER funds wind down. Based on district data, Autauga County Schools was able prevent the summer slide and/or increase student achievement in literacy for 67% of students attending the district's summer reading camps.

However, as American Rescue Plan and other pandemic relief funding expires, many Alabama youth will lose their programs—and families and communities will lose essential supports—if action is not taken. In Alabama, for every child in an afterschool program, 4 more would participate if a program were available. And a national fall 2023 survey of afterschool program providers found that nearly 3 in 4 are concerned about their program's long-term funding and future. Afterschool and summer programs across Alabama are accelerating students' growth, supporting students' well-being, and helping working families. To keep their doors open, these programs need additional investments at the local, state, and federal levels.

## IMPROVING SCHOOL-DAY ENGAGEMENT AND REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM







A 2023 U.S. Department of Education report on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC)—local before-school, afterschool, and summer learning programs that serve more than 1.3 million students attending high-poverty, low-performing schools—found that:

**7 IN 10** students in the program demonstrated an **IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING**

**NEARLY HALF** of students who were **CHRONICALLY ABSENT** the previous year **IMPROVED THEIR SCHOOL-DAY ATTENDANCE**

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ACCELERATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC GROWTH AND SUPPORT THEIR WELL-BEING

Alabama students in afterschool programs are:

-  Getting homework help (84%)
-  Engaging in STEM learning opportunities (68%)
-  Working on their reading and writing skills (71%)
-  Interacting with their peers and building social skills (94%)
-  Taking part in physical activities (83%)
-  Building confidence (79%)



**91%** of Alabama parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Alabama parents agree that afterschool programs are:



Helping working parents keep their jobs (79%)



Providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe (79%)

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Alabama parents favor public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs.



Research spanning several states shows that **EVERY \$1 INVESTED** in afterschool programs **SAVES AT LEAST \$3** by:

- ✓ Increasing kids' earning potential as adults
- ✓ Improving kids' performance at school
- ✓ Reducing crime and juvenile delinquency

With strong public support, a national survey found that approximately 8 in 10 registered voters said that afterschool programs are an absolute necessity for their community (79%) and that they want their federal, state, and local leaders to provide more funding for programs (80%).

## 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) programs engage students in hands-on learning activities aimed at supporting their academic growth, provide a variety of enrichment activities to complement school-day learning, and offer educational and support services to the families of participating children. The 2023 Department of Education annual performance report of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC found that among regular participants:



**MORE THAN 1 IN 2** improved their GPA



**7 IN 10** improved their engagement in learning



**2 IN 5** saw a decrease in school suspensions

In Alabama, 17,868 children in 141 communities take part in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center. 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants are the only dedicated federal funding sources that support local communities' afterschool and summer programs.

## AFTERSCHOOL WORKS

Studies have shown that students regularly participating in quality afterschool programs attend school more often, are more engaged in school, get better grades, and are more likely to be promoted to the next grade. For example, a 2023 report by the U.S. Department of Education on 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs nationally included findings that showed that Alabama students in the program became more engaged in learning and made both academic and behavioral gains. Based on teachers surveyed, more than 9 in 10 Alabama 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participants in grades 1 through 5 (95%) improved their engagement in learning and 61% of 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students with an attendance rate below 90% the previous school year improved their school-day attendance. A majority of Alabama 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC participants in grades 4 through 8 demonstrated growth on the state's reading/language arts (57%) and math assessments (56%), and 40% of students in grades 7 through 8 and 10-12 who had a GPA below 3.0 the previous year improved their GPA. Students in programs also demonstrated improvements in their behavior in school, with 72% of students decreasing their in-school suspensions compared to the previous year. These findings are similar to a 2021 evaluation by Troy University that found that surveyed teachers reported that most students participating in programs showed improvement in their academic performance (88%) and coming to school motivated to learn (71%), and that most students agreed that their afterschool program helped them to improve in reading (86%) and math (87%), as well as helped them behave better in school (81%).

