



# This is Afterschool in Arkansas

In Arkansas, the Rural Community Alliance, a nonprofit dedicated to empowering rural communities to bring about change, received \$276,000 in American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds from the Arkansas Out-of-School Network (AOSN) to support their afterschool youth development programs in four communities across the state. Using these funds to rent space from community partners for programming, pay staff and community members to support students, and purchase literacy resources and Chromebooks allowed the Rural Community Alliance to deliver programming such as STEM learning opportunities and physical activity, like yoga, to its students. The Rural Community Alliance served 74 students last summer and was able to prevent the summer slide for 95% of participants.

However, as American Rescue Plan and other pandemic relief funding expires, many Arkansas youth will lose their programs—and families and communities will lose essential supports—if action is not taken. In Arkansas, for every child in an afterschool program, 3 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 Arkansas 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

Arkansas students in afterschool programs are:

-  Getting homework help **(54%)**
-  Engaging in STEM learning opportunities **(61%)**
-  Working on their reading and writing skills **(62%)**
-  Interacting with their peers and building social skills **(86%)**
-  Taking part in physical activities **(86%)**
-  Building confidence **(80%)**



**86%** of Arkansas parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Arkansas parents agree that afterschool programs are:



Helping working parents keep their jobs **(83%)**



Providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe **(83%)**

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Arkansas 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 Arkansas, 12,821 children in 71 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. Demand for programming in Arkansas is so great that approximately 1 out of every 5 applications was not funded during the most recent competition.

## 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 evaluation by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality of Arkansas' 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program found that, consistent with previous years, regularly attending students are getting academic support and building foundational skills in their program. For example, more than 8 in 10 students report that staff in the program understand their homework and help them when they are stuck (84%) and that the activities in the program make them think (82%). Additionally, 96% of students attending programs report high levels of academic habits and skill development, such as doing well in school, asking for help, and making friends. Parent satisfaction is high, with more than 9 in 10 parents agreeing that their child is safe at the program (97%), staff care about their child and family (95%), and that the program helps balance working and parenting (95%).

