



# This is Afterschool in Connecticut

In Connecticut, the Connecticut Department of Education conducted three rounds of a summer learning grant competition with American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds from 2021 to 2023. In the first summer alone, \$8.6 million was granted to 235 programs. Based on the 121 sites that provided enrollment data for summer 2020 and summer 2021, camp enrollment more than doubled and in total served 108,000 Connecticut students. Students were able to take part in programming that included the arts, STEM, purposeful play, and college and career readiness, to name a few. An evaluation of programming in 2021 found that approximately three-quarters of camps used funds to offer new activities, hire more staff, and buy materials. For 30% of students, 2021 was their first time attending a summer program, and three-quarters of students surveyed indicated they had “a lot” of fun at their summer program, with the strongest correlation of students’ enjoyment with students’ relationship with camp staff.

However, as American Rescue Plan and other pandemic relief funding expires, many Connecticut youth will lose their programs—and families and communities will lose essential supports—if action is not taken. In Connecticut, 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 Connecticut 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

Connecticut students in afterschool programs are:

-  Getting homework help **(73%)**
-  Engaging in STEM learning opportunities **(80%)**
-  Working on their reading and writing skills **(59%)**
-  Interacting with their peers and building social skills **(89%)**
-  Taking part in physical activities **(86%)**
-  Building confidence **(82%)**



**92%** of Connecticut parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Connecticut parents agree that afterschool programs are:



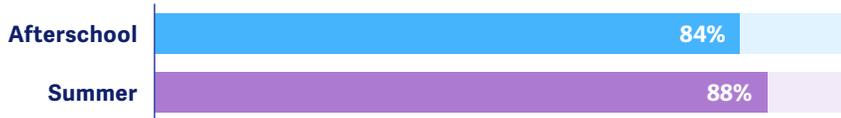
Helping working parents keep their jobs **(83%)**



Providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe **(85%)**

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Connecticut 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 Connecticut, 8,392 children in 111 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 Connecticut is so great that nearly 1 out of every 2 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, in a 2023 report by the U.S. Department of Education on 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs nationally, nearly half of Connecticut students in fourth through eighth grade demonstrated growth on the state's reading/language arts assessment (49%) and more than 4 in 10 (42%) demonstrated growth on the math assessment. Additionally, among students in grades 7 through 8 and 10-12 who had below a 3.0 GPA the previous year, 57% saw an improvement in their GPA. Students in programs also demonstrated improvements in their engagement in learning and behavior in school. Teachers reported that a majority of their students (54%) attending 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs improved their engagement in learning, 82% of students with an attendance rate below 90% the previous school year improved their school-day attendance, and 61% of students decreased their in-school suspensions compared to the previous year. These findings are similar to a 2023 evaluation of Connecticut's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs that reported positive findings, where students in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs had an attendance rate of 91%, and only 1% received any kind of disciplinary infraction during the 2021-2022 school year, a significant difference from 5.3% in 2019-2020. Programming also promoted youth voice and choice, with approximately 3 in 4 of all 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC sites in the state reporting that they encouraged students to initiate projects based on their interests (76%) and included opportunities for youth to take on specific programming responsibilities (73%).