



# This is Afterschool in Illinois

In Illinois, with the support of approximately \$5 million in American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds, Decatur Public Schools was able to re-launch its afterschool program in fall 2021, which is currently in its third year of operation during the 2023-2024 school year. Operating at 13 sites across the district Monday through Friday, from 6 a.m. to the start of the school day and from when the last school bell rings to 5:30 p.m., the Extended Day Program provides elementary and middle schoolers with a mix of academics and enrichment, including homework help, recreational activities, service learning, art, music, and STEM learning opportunities, as well as snacks and meals. The program is currently serving 700 students, more than 10 times the previous attendance, but still has a waitlist of more than 300 students due to the high demand from parents for the program. The district made the decision to dedicate ARP ESSER funds to an afterschool program due to a high level of interest from parents—in a survey to families, more than 90% of parents expressed interest in a before and afterschool program. Parents have shared through testimonials that without the Extended Day program, many of them would not be able to have active employment.

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

Illinois students in afterschool programs are:

-  Getting homework help (67%)
-  Engaging in STEM learning opportunities (72%)
-  Working on their reading and writing skills (65%)
-  Interacting with their peers and building social skills (91%)
-  Taking part in physical activities (84%)
-  Building confidence (80%)



**90%** of Illinois parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Illinois parents agree that afterschool programs are:



Helping working parents keep their jobs **(82%)**



Providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe **(82%)**

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Illinois 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 Illinois, 60,718 children in 544 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 Illinois is so great that more than 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, a 2023 evaluation of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs in Illinois by the Education Development Center found that, based on teacher surveys, elementary, middle, and high school students regularly attending afterschool programs saw both academic gains and improvements in school engagement. Regarding academic achievement, among students in need of improvement, teachers reported that 78% improved their class participation, 74% improved completing their homework, and 71% improved their overall academic performance.

Additionally, among students who had an attendance rate below 90% the previous year, more than 3 in 5 students (63%) improved their school-day attendance rate, and strong majorities of students who were in need of improvement improved their behavior in class (72%) and ability to get along with others (60%). The evaluation also found that students attending 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs more regularly were more likely to improve their school-day attendance; for example, 57% of students attending the program fewer than 15 hours improved their school-day attendance, compared to 68% of students who participated in the program 270 hours or more.