



# This is Afterschool in Nebraska

In Nebraska, with a nearly \$11 million investment of American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) funds, the Nebraska Department of Education and Beyond School Bells—the state’s afterschool network—established a summer learning grant that supported 112 sites and served more than 1,600 K-12 students during the summer of 2022. Students were able to take part in activities including STEM challenges, theater camp, cooking lessons, sports, gardening, nature exploration, entrepreneurship, and more. Among students surveyed, 86% agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something new during the summer program, and an overwhelming majority agreed or strongly agreed that the program was fun (90%), that they had and/or made friends during the summer (89%), and that they would recommend the summer program to other students (86%). Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the programs as well, with 9 in 10 agreeing or strongly agreeing that their child was highly engaged in the program and enjoyed attending (90%) and that they would recommend the program to other parents (90%). Approximately 2 in 3 parents (67%) agreed that their child was more prepared for the upcoming school year because of the summer program.

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

Nebraska students in afterschool programs are:

-  Getting homework help **(52%)**
-  Engaging in STEM learning opportunities **(55%)**
-  Working on their reading and writing skills **(62%)**
-  Interacting with their peers and building social skills **(94%)**
-  Taking part in physical activities **(89%)**
-  Building confidence **(81%)**



**93%** of Nebraska parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Nebraska parents agree that afterschool programs are:



Helping working parents keep their jobs **(84%)**



Providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe **(89%)**

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Nebraska 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 Nebraska, 16,744 children in 143 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 2024 evaluation by the University of Nebraska Medical Center of the state's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs found that both student participants and their parents reported positive program benefits. Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade agreed (on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is strongly disagree and 4 is strongly agree) that adults respected students (3.59), they enjoyed the program (3.59), and they could learn things taught at school (3.45). Parents also strongly agreed that the afterschool program was a benefit to their child (3.89), the afterschool programs were of high quality (3.81), and their child learned new things in the program (3.78).

These findings reinforce a 2023 report by the U.S. Department of Education on 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs nationally that found that based on teachers surveyed, 63% of participants in 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade improved their engagement in learning. Additionally, a 2022 statewide evaluation found that according to teacher surveys, approximately 3 in 4 students participating in Nebraska's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs showed moderate to significant improvement in their math (77%), science (76%), and reading academic performance (76%).

