



# This is Afterschool in Tennessee

In Knox County, Tennessee, the Freedom Village of Hope was awarded a \$50,000 State and Local Fiscal Recovery county grant to support teacher salaries and supplies for its 2023 East Tennessee Freedom Schools summer program, where students practiced reading, developed critical thinking skills, and learned to work collaboratively with their peers. The summer program included the Children's Defense Fund's (CDF) Freedom Schools program, a six-week literacy and empowerment program that incorporates three hours of reading per day centered around multicultural books and texts that reflect students' backgrounds and cultivate empathy and greater understanding. A typical day starts with program and community leaders celebrating and reading aloud to the scholars before transitioning into the Integrated Reading Curriculum that includes book discussions and group activities such as art projects, creating skits, or debating. In the afternoon, scholars participate in activities such as STEM, fitness, music, or field trips to science museums, zoos, and college campuses. With the new funds, they served 120 students in K- 8<sup>th</sup> grade and provided educational workshops for 40 families. Overall, 86% of their students improved or maintained their instructional reading levels and 95% of parents said their child is a better reader and has increased their confidence because of the program.

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

Tennessee students in afterschool programs are:

-  Getting homework help **(75%)**
-  Engaging in STEM learning opportunities **(78%)**
-  Working on their reading and writing skills **(70%)**
-  Interacting with their peers and building social skills **(83%)**
-  Taking part in physical activities **(84%)**
-  Building confidence **(83%)**



**99%** of Tennessee parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Tennessee parents agree that afterschool programs are:



Helping working parents keep their jobs **(80%)**



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

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Tennessee 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 Tennessee, 39,696 children in 477 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 Tennessee is so great that nearly 3 out of every 5 applications were 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 Tennessee's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs by the Tennessee Department of Education found that participation in programs was associated with positive academic and behavioral outcomes, with greater gains the higher the participation in the program.

Based on teacher surveys, 3 in 4 students (75%) improved their engagement in learning, and among attendees in 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 in 10 improved on the math and reading/language arts state assessments (10%, all), while more than 1 in 4 attendees (27%) in grades 7-8 and 10-12 with a GPA less than 3.0 improved. Slightly higher percentages of students who regularly attended the program improved their math (13%) and reading/language arts state assessment scores (13%) and GPAs (33%). Additionally, a majority of attendees experienced a decrease in in-school suspensions compared to the previous school year (69%), and among those who were chronically absent the previous year, a majority improved their attendance (69%). Parents with children in the program expressed satisfaction with the program, with 93% reporting an overall high level of satisfaction with the program's quality.