Throughout the pandemic, afterschool and summer programs adapted and expanded services to meet the needs of children and families. They are vital partners today in supporting students’ well-being and academic growth. Yet, too many kids in New Jersey are being left out. Prior to the pandemic, a survey of New Jersey parents found that for every child in an afterschool program, 3 more would participate if a program were available. These programs provide safe and supportive spaces to keep young people engaged in learning during a difficult and trying time. So it comes as no surprise that in a national fall 2020 survey, 75% of parents agreed that the experience of the pandemic made them appreciate teachers and afterschool providers more than ever before.

A 2019 evaluation of New Jersey’s 21st CCLC afterschool programs by the American Institutes for Research found that students attending programs at high levels had lower unexcused school-day absences compared to non-attendees. Additionally, among students surveyed, an overwhelming majority reported that the program helped them find out what they are good at and like to do (86%), learn things that help them in school (85%), and gain confidence (83%).
Supporting working families
Parents in New Jersey agree that afterschool:

- Helps working parents keep their jobs – 86%
- Provides working parents peace of mind – 88%
- Helps parents build connections to their child’s school day education – 69%

A smart investment
Research spanning several states shows that every $1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least $3 by:

- Increasing kids’ earning potential as adults
- Reducing crime and juvenile delinquency
- Improving kids’ performance at school

New Jersey parents want investment in afterschool and summer programs
The overwhelming majority of parents in New Jersey favor public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs:

- 89% favor public funding for afterschool opportunities
- 89% favor public funding for summer learning opportunities

Transforming Lives
“During the pandemic, it was challenging because I was social distancing and not doing certain activities. But, my 21st Century [Community Learning Center] program has been a place where I’ve been able to meet new friends, communicate, and be social with others. I wasn’t a talker, but now I am! The mentors in my program also helped me stay on top of my work and encouraged me. Without my program, I wouldn’t have the grades I do now, and I wouldn’t be as social as I am. I wouldn’t be able to do a lot of things without my program.”

Kyla Anderson
High school student attending a 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program

21st Century Community Learning Centers
21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) are local before-school, afterschool, and summer learning programs that serve students attending high-poverty, low-performing schools. These 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 2021 Department of Education annual performance report of 21st CCLC found that among regular participants:

- 1 in 2 improved their language arts or math grades
- 7 in 10 improved their homework completion and class participation
- More than 3 in 5 improved their behavior in class

In New Jersey, 8,000 children in 175 communities take part in a 21st Century Community Learning Center.

21st CCLC grants are the only dedicated federal funding sources that support local communities’ afterschool and summer programs.

Demand for programming in New Jersey is so great that 3 out of every 5 applications were not funded during the most recent competition.

The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs.

Learn more at: www.afterschoolalliance.org