



# This is Afterschool in Alaska

"Afterschool programs created so many opportunities for me, and I love the valuable mentorship I have had and the connections I made. Afterschool programs taught me the importance of goals and my dreams."

"From my experience as a military child, I really had to struggle with the difficulty of trying to be myself. ... Having an afterschool program can get kids out of their comfort zone and [help them] make new friends. Meeting people in these programs not only feels great but also allows students to show their true self."

These student quotes are a small sampling of the invaluable supports and experiences afterschool programs are providing young people—from creating a safe space where they can connect with caring adults to helping them build the skills to reach their full potential.

However, in Alaska, for every child in an afterschool program, 3 more would participate and are missing out, despite strong public support for afterschool. A national fall 2022 survey found that approximately 8 in 10 registered voters said that afterschool programs are an absolute necessity for their community (79%) and want their federal, state, and local leaders to provide more funding for programs (80%).

## AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ACCELERATE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC GROWTH AND SUPPORT THEIR WELL-BEING

Among Alaska students in afterschool programs:



**69%** are getting homework help



**93%** are interacting with their peers and building social skills



**86%** are engaging in STEM learning opportunities



**82%** are building confidence



**89%** are taking part in physical activities



**93%** are learning responsible decision-making



**97%** of Alaska parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program

## EVIDENCE OF AFTERSCHOOL'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS' WELL-BEING

Only 10 states\* have included questions regarding participation in afterschool programs in their state Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted as a part of an effort by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, these additional questions have produced findings demonstrating positive correlations between participation in afterschool programs and young people's mental and physical health. For example:

**ALASKA** Students participating in afterschool programs at least two days a week were 18% less likely to use alcohol, 39% less likely to use marijuana, and 28% less likely to have an unexcused absence.

**VERMONT** High schoolers who participated in at least one hour of afterschool activities were less likely than their non-participating peers to report carrying a weapon or report being threatened or injured by a weapon on school property.

**WISCONSIN** Students involved in at least one hour of extracurricular activities report lower rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.\*\*

\*AK, CT, MI, MN, NM, OH, VT, VI, WA, WI

\*\*The Wisconsin YRBS question in the middle school questionnaire asked, "During an average week when you are in school, how many total hours do you participate in school activities such as sports, band, drama, or clubs?" and the high school questionnaire asked, "Do you participate in any school activities, such as sports, band, drama, or clubs?"

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. A 2020 evaluation of Alaska's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs by Education Northwest found that students who participated more regularly in programs saw greater academic and behavioral gains. Teachers surveyed reported that an overwhelming majority of students attending the programs for at least 60 days improved their academic performance (74%), class participation (73%), and class behavior (60%), as well as formed relationships with adults (73%) and worked collaboratively with peers (71%). Respondents shared that students who attended programs for more than 90 days made the most significant improvements over the year.

### AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Alaska parents agree that afterschool programs:



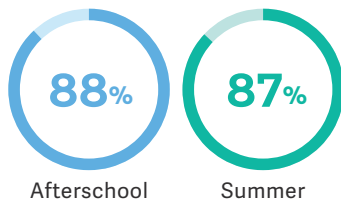
**81%** are helping working parents keep their jobs



**86%** are providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe

### AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Alaska 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

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> 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 2022 Department of Education annual performance report of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC found that among regular participants in need of improvement:

- ✓ **NEARLY 1 IN 2** improved their language arts or math grades
- ✓ **NEARLY 7 IN 10** improved their homework completion and class participation
- ✓ **NEARLY MORE THAN 3 IN 5** improved their behavior in class

In Alaska, 3,597 children in 42 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 Alaska is so great that 3 out of every 10 applications were not funded during the most recent competition.

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING IS HELPING INCREASE ACCESS TO AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAMS

A spring 2023 survey of afterschool and summer program providers found that while less than 1 in 5 providers (17%) report that they have received COVID-relief funding, those with this funding stream have been able to use it to keep their doors open and increase access to their program. Programs report that they have been able to bolster staff recruitment efforts (47%), hire more staff (44%) and serve more students (44%), expand program offerings (38%), and offer new summer programs (18%).

Funds from American Rescue Plan (ARP) continue to present a tremendous opportunity to help increase access to afterschool and summer programs. For example, the Yukon-Koyukuk School District, located in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, is putting \$30,000 of its ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds toward afterschool programming across 15 sites, where students will be able to take part in a mix of academic enrichment, wellness, and culturally relevant activities. Activities include art projects, cooking classes, cultural training, and physical activity opportunities. The afterschool programs will also address students' mental well-being, working in partnership with local mental health aides and counselors to talk about issues such as bullying and substance abuse.

