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.**

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 Nebraska, for every child in an afterschool program, 4 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 Nebraska students in afterschool programs:

- 52% are getting homework help
- 55% are engaging in STEM learning opportunities
- 89% are taking part in physical activities
- 94% are interacting with their peers and building social skills
- 81% are building confidence
- 63% are learning responsible decision-making
- 93% of Nebraska parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program

*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 2022 evaluation by the University of Nebraska Medical Center of the state's 21st CCLC programs found that, according to teacher surveys, approximately 3 in 4 participating students showed moderate to significant improvement in their math (77%), science (76%), and reading academic performance (76%). Additionally, a majority of students saw at least some improvement in areas of completing their homework (64%), behavior in class (57%), and getting along with their peers (53%). Both students in the programs and their parents reported positive benefits of the program. Most students agree that "adults in this program treat kids with respect" (89%), "I have friends in this program" (87%) and "this program helps me learn new things" (75%). Parents also strongly agreed (on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 equals strongly disagree and 4 equals strongly agree) that the afterschool program is a benefit to their child (3.92).

**AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES**

Nebraska parents agree that afterschool programs:

- 84% are helping working parents keep their jobs
- 89% are providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe

**AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT**

An overwhelming majority of Nebraska parents favor public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs.

- 92% agree that afterschool programs increase kids' earning potential as adults
- 93% agree that afterschool programs improve kids' performance at school
- 92% agree that afterschool programs reduce crime and juvenile delinquency

**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 2022 Department of Education annual performance report of 21st CCLC found that among regular participants in need of improvement:

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

In Nebraska, 16,448 children in 150 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.

**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, Johnson County Central Public Schools is dedicating ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds to create a new afterschool program for elementary students in the district. For the 2022-2023 school year, the district allocated $85,000 to the program, which runs from when the last school bell rings to 6 p.m., providing homework help, reading and writing opportunities, additional academically enriching activities, and a snack for students in grades K-6.

The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. Learn more at: [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)