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 Ohio, for every child in an afterschool program, 5 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 Ohio students in afterschool programs:

- **74%** are getting homework help
- **91%** are interacting with their peers and building social skills
- **70%** are engaging in STEM learning opportunities
- **81%** are building confidence
- **82%** are taking part in physical activities
- **71%** are learning responsible decision-making
- **92%** of Ohio 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 2020 evaluation of Ohio’s 21st CCLC programs by the American Institutes for Research found that participation in the program had a statistically significant positive impact on academic outcomes, with regular program participants scoring higher on math and English language arts assessments compared with similar non-participating youth. Additionally, it was found that participation in the programs was associated with statistically significant reductions in both unexcused absences and disciplinary incidents. Based on youth surveys, a large majority of students agreed that their program helped them learn things that will be important for their future (80%) and in school (79%), find out what is important to them (77%), make new friends (76%), and improve their confidence (75%).

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Ohio parents agree that afterschool programs:

- 76% are helping working parents keep their jobs
- 80% are providing working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT

An overwhelming majority of Ohio 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

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 Ohio, 16,449 children in 343 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 Ohio is so great that 3 out of every 4 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, Symmes Valley Schools used ESSER funds for an afterschool program for K-8 students. During the 2021-2022 school year, 130 of the 580 students at Symmes Valley Elementary attended, and the school saw increases in test and spelling scores. The program is offered three days a week and includes an academic component taught by school-day teachers and “student choice component,” which includes community partners such as 4-H, high school students, and the library for activities such as crafts, letter writing, physical education, and coding. The program offers students snacks and transportation as well. A parent survey showed the program has been very well-received. The district continued the program during the 2022-2023 year.

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