



21st Century Community Learning Centers: A Foundation for Progress

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to afterschool programs. It grew from a budget of \$1 million in 1997 to \$1 billion in 2002 and has remained at approximately \$1 billion for the last several years. The No Child Left Behind Act reauthorized 21st CCLC in 2002, transferring the administration of the grants from the U.S. Department of Education to the State Education Agencies. Each state receives funds based on its share of Title I funding for low-income students. Funds are also allotted to outlying areas and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The 2002 reauthorization also narrowed the focus of 21st CCLC from a community learning center model where all members of the community benefited from access to school resources such as teachers, computer labs, gymnasiums and classrooms to an afterschool program model that provides the following services to students attending high-poverty, low-performing schools:

- Academic enrichment activities that can help students meet state and local achievement standards.
- A broad array of additional services designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program, such as *drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs.*
- Literacy and related educational development services to the families of children who are served in the program.

Conversations about the next reauthorization are scheduled to begin in 2006 or 2007.

Since administration of the grants was transferred to the states, most states have made three or more rounds of new grants. There are now nearly 3,000 grants providing afterschool programs for 1 million children and youth in 8,750 schools and communities across the country. Other characteristics:

- The average grant size is \$346,787.
- On average, there are 3 centers/sites per grant with a budget of approximately \$115,000 per center. The average annual cost per student is \$1,000.
- 69 percent of grantees and 61 percent of applicants are school districts.
- 67 percent of centers are open 11 or more hours per week.
- 91 percent of centers are open four or more days per week.
- Academic assistance and recreational activities are the most common services offered by programs.
- About half of centers serve elementary school students exclusively, and at least two-thirds of all centers serve some elementary students. About 36 percent of centers serve middle school students, but only 20 percent of these centers exclusively target this population. Finally, 15 percent of centers serve high school students. Only 5 percent of centers exclusively target high school students.

- The average number of regular attendees per center is 75, with nearly two-thirds of attendees qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. In addition, about 17 percent of the participants have limited English proficiency, a figure which is greater than the overall percentage of LEP students in the US (11 percent).

(Data courtesy of the U.S. Department of Education and Learning Point Associates, 2005.)

Evaluations and teacher reports have revealed positive results in behavior and achievement for students who regularly attend 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

- In 2003-2004, 45 percent of all 21st CCLC program participants had improved their reading grades, and 41 percent improved their math grades. (U.S. Dept of Education and Learning Point, 2005.)
- Teachers reported that a majority of students improved in every category of behavior. The categories with the highest percentages of student improvement were academic performance, completing homework to the teacher's satisfaction, class participation and turning in homework on time. (U.S. Dept of Education and Learning Point, 2005.)
- A state evaluation in New Hampshire found that 59 percent of elementary school and 62 percent of middle school students who regularly attended showed progress in overall academic performance. (Harvard Family Research Project Afterschool Evaluation Symposium, September 2005.)
- A report on the state's 21st CCLCs from the University of Florida found that the program was effective in improving students' academic performance, school attendance, disciplinary actions and social behaviors. (Harvard Family Research Project Afterschool Evaluation Symposium, September 2005.)
- The Anne Arundel County school district in Maryland's study revealed that participants attended school more regularly and had slightly higher proficiency ratings in reading and math. Also, teachers perceived increases in students' overall achievement in school and their confidence in learning. (Harvard Family Research Project Afterschool Evaluation Symposium, September 2005.)
- A study of 21st CCLC-funded afterschool programs in New England found that children who participated in the 21st CCLC-funded program had significantly higher reading achievement and were rated by teachers as holding greater expectancies of success compared to children in other types of afterschool care. The differences were greatest for those children who were rated as highly engaged in the 21st CCLC-funded program. (Mahoney, Lord and Carryl, *Child Development*, July/August 2005.)
- Benefits of afterschool participation extend well beyond the classroom. In an evaluation of The After-School Corporation (TASC) afterschool programs in New York, 41 percent of principals reported that TASC "very much" improved student safety, and 17 percent reported that it "very much" reduced vandalism at the school. (Policy Studies Associates, *Summary Report of the TASC Evaluation*, November 2004.)
- Across the nation, communities with afterschool programs have reported reduced vandalism and juvenile crime since the afterschool program began operating in the community. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, crime rates at the 19 schools considered least safe prior to the establishment of LA's BEST, a large and nationally recognized afterschool program funded in part with 21st CCLC funds, dropped 40 percent after the program was introduced. (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California, *California's After-School Choice: Juvenile Crime or Safe Learning Time*, 2001.)

The 21st CCLC initiative has spurred state and local investments in afterschool and helped leverage additional funding to build sustainable afterschool infrastructures.

- The typical 21st CCLC grantee has 6 partners who contribute to the project by providing services and resources not directly funded by 21st CCLC. These partners may include community-based organizations; nationally affiliated non-profits, such as YMCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs; libraries; museums; health clinics and universities. Contributions from partners include volunteer staff, supplies and materials or services such as evaluation or fundraising assistance. (U.S. Dept of Education and Learning Point, 2005.)
- 21st CCLC grant money allows programs to leverage and link together funding streams that can lead to sustainable programs. On average, 21st CCLC grantees have two other funding sources. These sources include the local school districts, state funding, other federal funding, philanthropic and private funding. 9 percent of 21st CCLC grantees are also Supplemental Education Services (SES) providers. (U.S. Dept of Education and Learning Point, 2005.)
- Detroit's citywide afterschool initiative grew out the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative in 1996. Now called Mayor's Time, Detroit's initiative is a public and private partnership on behalf of children and youth, with access to city departments and employees – partnerships that will continue to help focus attention of the community on the importance of afterschool programming in the future.
- San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom said in his 2005 State of the City Address, "We've set a goal to make universal After-School a reality for all elementary and middle school kids, so that San Francisco's youth have a safe place to play and study during the critical after-school hours." The city already has some projects in place to build on, include the Beacons Initiative and SF TEAM, and it is making preparations for the eventual implementation of Proposition 49. Mayor Newsom is also a [Project 2010](#) partner.
- In 2002, California voters passed Proposition 49, a ballot initiative that will provide an additional \$400 million for the state's existing afterschool program.
- In 2001, both houses of the Illinois General Assembly unanimously passed resolutions to create the Illinois After-School Initiative, a task force to study the state's afterschool programs. This is the first study in Illinois, and in the nation, that takes a step in the direction of universal afterschool.
- More than 31 states have started [Statewide Afterschool Networks](#) to develop state-level supports and policies to ensure quality and sustainable afterschool programs in their states.

Despite strong and sustained public support -- 9 out of 10 Americans see afterschool programs as a necessity -- funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers has remained stagnant, leaving a great demand unfulfilled.

- Funding for 21st CCLC hit a plateau after peaking in 2002 at \$1 billion, despite yearly increases recommended in the No Child Left Behind Act. The Act authorized \$2.25 billion for Fiscal Year 2006, but the President's budget called for \$991 million, the same level as the previous year. After a 1 percent across-the-board cut to education programs, Congress appropriated only \$981 million.
- Current funding levels do not come close to meeting the nationwide demand.
 - There are 15.3 million children in the United States whose parents would send them to an afterschool program if one were available. (*America After 3 PM*, Afterschool Alliance, May 2004.)
 - At an average cost of \$1,000 per student, fewer than one million children and youth can benefit from 21st CCLC-funded programs at the current funding level of \$981 million.

- In 2004, 3,469 organizations applied for 21st CCLC afterschool grants. Just 1,327 of them received funding—a funding rate of only 38 percent. (U.S. Dept of Education and Learning Point, 2005.)
- The majority of states can no longer make new awards to support afterschool programs. At level funding, most states can only continue to support existing grantees, and cost-of-living increases make that more difficult each year. (*Impossible Choices*, Afterschool Alliance, December 2005.)

American families need quality afterschool programs more than ever. In most families both parents or the single parent is in the workforce. In communities today, 14.3 million children take care of themselves after the school day ends. The hours between 3 and 6 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex. The afterschool hours can be a time for trouble or a time for kids to learn new skills, develop relationships with caring adults and prepare for the future. In a country where only one-third of young people graduate high school prepared for college, work and citizenship, we can't afford to waste the after school hours.

Afterschool programs provide children a safe and stimulating environment in the hours after the school day. For the sake of our children, our families and our communities, afterschool programs absolutely must exist. America's working parents need the support of 21st Century Community Learning Centers to help keep their children safe during the afternoon hours, schools need the support to meet the growing challenges of preparing a 21st century workforce, and children need these safe, enriching environments to learn and grow.

Federal funding sources such as 21st CCLC are essential to help states and local communities establish support systems that make afterschool programs and the extra learning time they provide an expectation, not an afterthought. The 14.3 million children who are unsupervised after school deserve better.