

21st Century Community Learning Centers

The Committee recommends an appropriation of \$1,151,673,000, the same amount as the fiscal year 2012 level and budget request, for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Funds are allocated to States by formula, which in turn, award at least 95 percent of their allocations to LEAs, community-based organizations and other public and private entities. Grantees use these resources to establish or expand community learning centers that provide activities offering significant extended learning opportunities, such as before- and afterschool programs, recreational activities, drug and violence prevention, and family literacy programs for students and related services to their families. Centers must target their services to students who attend schools that are eligible to operate a schoolwide program under title I of the ESEA or serve high percentages of students from low-income families.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that students benefit academically from a longer school day, week, and year. The Committee notes that some school districts have adopted strategies to extend the school day without significant new investments, such as through staggered school schedules and innovative partnerships with community partners.

The Committee bill includes new language to expand the design options for subgrants under the 21st CCLC program for high-quality, afterschool, before school, summer learning, and expanded learning time programs.

The Committee believes that SEAs should award grants to high-quality programs that address individual student learning needs and student well-being. Funded programs should deliver services through a variety of high-quality and effective strategies for boosting learning and enrichment including afterschool, before school, summer school, or expanded day, week, or year opportunities; align with and complement, rather than replicate, the regular school day, by offering a range of activities that capture student interest and support student engagement to promote higher class attendance, reduce risk for retention or dropping out, and foster good health; integrate academics, enrichment, and skill development through hands-on experiences that make learning relevant and engaging; and actively address the specific learning needs and interests of all types of students, especially those who may benefit from approaches and experiences not offered in the traditional classroom setting.

The Committee urges the Department to provide guidance and technical assistance to States, schools, and community partners on how to develop and maintain strong community-school partnerships, implement continuous quality improvement processes, and ensure that programs meet the needs of individual students. The Committee also urges the Department to consult with experts in the field, including State and local intermediaries, in creating and providing such guidance and technical assistance. The Committee directs the Department to refrain from giving priority to, showing preference for, or providing direction about whether communities should use these funds for afterschool, before school, summer school, or expanded school day programs, unless specifically requested by SEAs or LEAs.

The Committee also directs the Secretary to report to Congress on the progress of the ESEA--No Child Left Behind waiver process initiated in the fall of 2011, specifically in terms of the impact on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and student participation in, and access to, afterschool, before school, and summer learning programs, as a result of the flexibility provided to SEAs under waiver option 11. The Department should report on the number of children served and the centers/sites offering expanded learning in the 3 years preceding the waiver approval and the 3 years following waiver approval, as well as the number of hours of and diversity of programming available to students through such grants at each site and the average cost of the programs (per student and per site) before and after waiver approval. All data should be provided at the State level.