



## Recommendations to Improve Afterschool in the Reauthorization of No Child Left Behind

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

#### 1) Increase authorized funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program.

When the *No Child Left Behind Act* was passed in 2002 it included a bipartisan commitment to quality afterschool programs by calling for steadily increasing investments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) Program. However, instead of following this roadmap, funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Program has been frozen since fiscal year 2002 - with across the board cuts and inflation adding up to \$20 million in real cuts - and too many children without access to quality afterschool programs. If fully funded at the currently authorized level, an additional 1.5 million children would have access to quality afterschool programs. This is just a fraction of the 14.3 million kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> graders who continue to be unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends.

The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Program is a worthwhile and necessary investment. Evaluations of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, including the U.S. Department of Education's own evaluation, show that these investments are having a great impact on children's academic achievement and behavior. In 2003-2004, 45 percent of all 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program participants had improved their reading grades, and 41 percent improved their math grades. Teachers reported that a majority of the students participating in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs improved their academic performance, improved their school attendance, completed more homework on time and to the teacher's satisfaction, and improved their class participation (U.S. Department of Education and Learning Point Associates, 2005). Beyond the academic gains, these programs are making kids and communities safer by reducing vandalism and juvenile crime. 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.)

In addition to these impacts on children and youth, the money invested in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC is supported by investments from state and local sources. The average 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grantee has two other funding sources - these include the local school district, state funding, other federal funding, philanthropic or private funding. In recent years, states and cities with Republican and Democratic leaders have increased their afterschool spending - the federal government must do the same. We recommend that authorization levels be included that call for increased investments in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC each year covered by the law.

*For more information, visit [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)*



<i>Funding Level</i>	<i># of Children Served*</i>	<i>Percentage of Eligible Children**</i>
\$981 million (current)	1 million	7%
\$2.5 billion (currently authorized)	2.5 million	17%
\$3 billion	3 million	21%
\$4 billion	4 million	27%
\$5 billion	5 million	34%

\* Number of children served is based on the cost estimate of \$1000 per child.

\*\* Eligible children is defined as all children attending schoolwide Title I schools, or 14,638,473 students.

**2) Enhance sustainability of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs by giving states the flexibility to make grants renewable based on grant performance.**

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers have demonstrated strong positive results in the academic behavior and achievement of students who regularly attend the programs. Currently, there are nearly 3,000 grantees providing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC afterschool programs, but more than one-third of these, or an estimated 36 percent, will reach the end of their 3, 4, or 5 year grant in 2007 and 2008. While it is important for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC money to seed new programs, it is equally important that programs that have demonstrated success and built a foundation in the community, but are not yet self-sustaining, be able to continue to access 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds. Grantees would have to compete for grant renewal, and states could encourage sustainability with other funding sources by capping the renewed grant at the lowest level of the grantee's previous grant and/or by requiring grantees to develop a sustainability plan, including participation in sustainability training, as part of their application.

**3) Increase quality by giving states the option to expand the Training and Technical Assistance Set -Aside up to five percent to engage in activities designed to improve quality and availability of afterschool programs.**

With the recent growth in afterschool programs comes the need for infrastructure at the state level to support these programs. Enhancing quality across programs requires technical assistance on best practices, sustainability and other issues, professional development for the afterschool workforce, and the development of systems to effectively deliver these tools throughout a state. At the same time, we know 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs are only reaching a fraction of the children and youth who need and could benefit from their services. Many communities still struggle with a lack of locally available afterschool programs, and lack the infrastructure necessary to support the development of an afterschool initiative. To address these infrastructure and capacity needs, we propose expanding the current three percent set-aside for state activities to a set-aside of up to five percent for states to engage in activities designed to improve the quality and availability of afterschool programs including: increased technical assistance, professional development, and assistance to

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communities in planning and developing grant proposals for afterschool initiatives. States would be able to do this as long as increasing the set-aside would not impact funding to current grantees.

### *Improving Supplemental Education Services*

#### **4) Improve quality and delivery of Supplemental Education Services by making these funds more accessible to comprehensive afterschool programs.**

Studies show that quality, comprehensive afterschool programs<sup>1</sup> benefit children and youth the most (Halpern, 2002; Piha and Miller, 2003; Fusco, 2001). These programs not only boost student achievement but also positively impact student behaviors, skill development, self-esteem and confidence. Evaluations find that limiting programs' focus to purely academic activities reduces the impact on academic achievement. For example, Ross et al (1992) found that while afterschool programs that promote increased self-esteem and confidence for students have positive effects on standardized test scores in math and reading, those focusing primarily on homework completion did not result in increased academic achievement

Additionally, research reveals challenges in the implementation of Supplemental Education Services (SES) with slow rates of take-up and eligible students going unserved - often because parents are not getting timely or adequate information about SES and have limited opportunities to make informed decisions about the program or providers (Public/Private Ventures, 2006). In fact, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that in the 2003-2004 school year only 18 percent of eligible students received the free services (2005). Meanwhile, locally operated afterschool programs that could be serving as known and trusted institutions for service delivery face hurdles that prevent many from becoming providers. Administrative requirements, difficult recruiting environments created by the nature of SES, and the financial mechanism that SES employs constitute obstacles that keep many of these smaller organizations scarce among SES providers (Public/Private Ventures, 2006).

In order to enhance quality and better serve students, we propose directing states to increase emphasis on a comprehensive service delivery model that encourages existing school-based, community-based, faith-based and other public agency afterschool programs to become SES providers, and/or strengthens partnerships between SES providers and afterschool programs. This can be done by directing states to prioritize outreach and technical assistance to such programs, including 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, and to incorporate an expectation of partnership with afterschool programs into state SES criteria. Additionally, the Department of Education should make an exception for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs run by schools or districts to the rule that LEAs and schools designated as in need of improvement are unable to provide SES. Because 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs must be comprised of a partnership between the LEA/school and entities outside the

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<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive afterschool programs are those that present academic instruction in fun and engaging activities, and at the same time provide a safe environment for children and youth where they can explore extra-curricular interests, develop talents, and receive extra attention and support from caring adults. These programs typically operate a minimum of 12 hours per week.



school (such as community-based organizations), 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs should be considered distinct from the school or school district itself and therefore able to provide SES. Finally, in order to reduce the current barriers that keep smaller organizations from participating in SES, states should be directed to consider intermediary organizations for approval to provide SES.

Another obstacle that has impeded the success of SES is the lack of any administrative funds for the states to implement the program. As a comparison, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program allows for states to set aside up to two percent of their 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC allocation to be used for “the administrative costs of carrying out its responsibilities.” We recommend the consideration of a similar structure for the administration of SES. This would not only facilitate administration of the program, but would aid states in supplying the above-mentioned support to afterschool programs.