

# This is Afterschool in Illinois



Afterschool Alliance

Throughout the pandemic, afterschool and summer programs adapted and expanded services to meet the needs of children and families. They are vital partners today in supporting students' well-being and academic growth. Yet, too many kids in Illinois are being left out. Prior to the pandemic, a survey of Illinois parents found that for every child in an afterschool program, **4 more would participate if a program were available**. These programs provide safe and supportive spaces to keep young people engaged in learning during a difficult and trying time. So it comes as no surprise that in a national fall 2020 survey, 75% of parents agreed that the experience of the pandemic made them appreciate teachers and afterschool providers more than ever before.

## Accelerating students' learning and growth

Students in afterschool programs in Illinois are:



Getting homework help – **67%**



Interacting with their peers and building social skills – **91%**



Taking part in STEM learning opportunities – **72%**

## Promoting healthy futures

Parents in Illinois agree that afterschool programs are helping young people to:



Learn life skills – **80%**



Be physically active – **84%**



Build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors – **75%**



Access nutritious foods – **70%**



Build confidence – **80%**



Stay safe and out of trouble – **77%**

A 2021 Education Development Center evaluation of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs in Illinois found that regularly participating students made significant academic and behavioral gains during the 2019-20 school year. Teachers surveyed shared that 75% of elementary students and 70% of middle/high school students improved their academic performance, and 60% of elementary and 58% of middle/high school students showed improvement in getting along with other students and behaving well in class. Programs offered a variety of activities for students, including STEM (96% of elementary/middle school programs and 88% of high school programs), arts (91%), and service learning (65%).

## American Rescue Plan Funding Helping Increase Access to Afterschool and Summer Programs During the Pandemic

Over the past two years, an overwhelming majority of afterschool and summer program providers have been concerned about their program's long-term funding and future. Costs associated with recruiting and retaining staff, instituting new COVID-19 health and safety protocols, and adding program space to allow for social distancing are a few of the added expenses afterschool and summer programs faced through the pandemic. Funds from American Rescue Plan present a tremendous opportunity to help afterschool and summer programs support the children and families in their communities. For example, the Illinois Department of Education reported that Decatur Public Schools (DPS) used its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds to re-launch its afterschool program in fall 2021 and to extend learning and provide comprehensive support to its students, which included robotics, music, reading help, and more. The program drew approximately 500 pre-K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students, which was 10 times the previous attendance due to DPS' ability to offer the program free of charge.



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## Supporting working families

Parents in Illinois agree that afterschool:



Helps working parents keep their jobs – **82%**



Helps parents build connections to their child's school day education – **63%**



Provides working parents peace of mind – **82%**

## A smart investment

Research spanning several states shows that every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least \$3 by:



Increasing kids' earning potential as adults



Reducing crime and juvenile delinquency



Improving kids' performance at school

## Illinois parents want investment in afterschool and summer programs

The overwhelming majority of parents in Illinois favor public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs:

**89%**

favor public funding for afterschool opportunities

**87%**

favor public funding for summer learning opportunities

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

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> 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 2021 Department of Education annual performance report of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC found that among regular participants:

**1 in 2**

improved their language arts or math grades

**7 in 10**

improved their homework completion and class participation

MORE THAN

**3 in 5**

improved their behavior in class

In Illinois, **51,504 children in 612 communities** take part in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center.

21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants are the only dedicated federal funding sources that support local communities' afterschool and summer programs.

Demand for programming in Illinois is so great that **3 out of every 10** applications were not funded during the most recent competition.

## Transforming Lives

"During the pandemic, it was challenging because I was social distancing and not doing certain activities. But, my 21<sup>st</sup> Century [Community Learning Center] program has been a place where I've been able to meet new friends, communicate, and be social with others. I wasn't a talker, but now I am! The mentors in my program also helped me stay on top of my work and encouraged me. Without my program, I wouldn't have the grades I do now, and I wouldn't be as social as I am. I wouldn't be able to do a lot of things without my program."

**Kyla Anderson**

High school student attending a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center afterschool program

