

### LEARNING AND RECOVERY



## Goodman Community Center

Madison, Wisconsin

**3,200** Average number of students served during the school year

Average number of students served during COVID-19

**200** During the school year

**175** During the summer

**92%** Students from low-income families

#### Main funding sources:

- ▶ 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers
- ▶ City of Madison
- ▶ Wisconsin Shares
- ▶ Fundraising

## Keeping kids engaged in learning during COVID-19

On March 16, 2020, 25 states and the District of Columbia ordered schools to close and on March 19, California became the first state to issue a statewide stay-at-home order in response to COVID-19. By early April, more than 90 percent of people living in the U.S., including more than 55 million students, found their lives upended by the country's response to slow the spread of the coronavirus. At the time of the release of this issue brief, the U.S. alone has more than 4.2 million confirmed cases and lost more than 146,000 lives due to the virus.

Joining local efforts, afterschool programs across the country adjusted their operations to best address the urgent needs of the children and families in their community: delivering meals, providing care for children of essential workers, finding ways to keep students engaged in learning remotely, and remaining a source of support to students and families to help young people emerge from this crisis strong, resilient, and hopeful.

### Overview

During the course of a typical year, the **Goodman Community Center (GCC)** provides the east and north sides of Madison with a wide range of supports, including early childcare, a high school innovation campus for opportunity youth, a food pantry, a teen employment program, senior recreational activities, and afterschool and summer programming. To address the challenges created by COVID-19 in their community, GCC moved its afterschool programming online and expanded its direct service supports for families, including meal deliveries and check-ins with parents.

### A typical day in response to COVID-19

In late March, one week after schools in the Madison Metropolitan School District closed, GCC launched its new set of programming comprised of a mix of online learning for students and direct services for families in response to the conditions created by the pandemic. Each day, GCC students were able to log into the program's portal and receive homework help and take part in an assortment of enrichment activities such as cooking lessons, expressive arts, hip-hop, and fitness classes for kids and their families. GCC's direct services included transitioning their food pantry into a drive-thru pick up

pantry program to reduce person-to-person contact, adding a meal delivery program, and providing care packages to families that included school supplies, art materials, activities, games and books, as well as personal care and household products that were not available through the local food pantry. This summer, GCC is offering full- and half-day in-person programming that will focus on engaging young people in the outdoors and helping them explore their community.

## Impacts

During the pandemic, GCC shifted resources to address food insecurity among Madison families, serving more than 450 families each week through its food pantry, three times the number of families served a week in a typical year. Additionally, through its meal delivery program, between the end of March and June, GCC delivered more than 10,000 meals and 1,000 bags of groceries to families in Worthington Park and Brentwood Union Corner. Families have shared their appreciation of the program, stating, “The center has really filled a niche in our community” and “[GCC is a] truly fine community organization. We’re all better for having the Goodman Community Center in our city.”

## Program characteristics

The Goodman Community Center initiated its new programming in response to the pandemic one week after halting its in-person services. During that week, staff met to discuss how to best continue to carry out its mission to “strengthen lives and secure futures” while keeping their community and their staff safe and healthy. Based on communication with parents and schools, as well as what they were seeing in the community, GCC made the decision to shift its programming to focus on online learning for their students and address the issue of food insecurity in Madison.

To support school-day learning, GCC provided an array of online programming for students, including academic support, cooking, arts, global learning, book clubs, and teen leadership. The program also recognized the challenges their students were experiencing while moving to an online learning environment, and helped their middle and high school students navigate learning remotely. Additionally, learning that many of their students did not have access to the internet or a laptop to complete their school work, GCC applied for an emergency COVID-19 grant and received funding to pay for six months of internet connection for families without access and purchased Chromebooks for students without a computer at home.

Keeping their students active and providing opportunities to step away from a screen was also important to GCC. For example, the program moved its Fit Youth Initiative class (FYI) online, where students could take part in exercise classes. As parents began to join their children, GCC expanded FYI into a family fitness class. GCC also offered a DIY class, where students were able to work on painting and construction projects. All materials needed for classes, including recipe ingredients, paint, and art materials, were provided to families by GCC.



## Challenges

In addition to a national health crisis, the effects of the pandemic have reached into all corners of life in the U.S:

**An economic crisis.** Between mid-March and June, more than 52 million people filed for unemployment. As a result of layoffs, furloughs, and reduced hours due to stay-at-home orders, individuals are struggling to meet basic needs, including food security and paying rent.

**A crisis in education.** It is estimated that students missed approximately 30 percent of in-person learning during the 2019-2020 school year and teachers have reported that 23 percent of students are not attending online classes. Research by NWEA projects that students may start the new school year having lost close to 30 percent of their learning gains in reading and 50 percent of their gains in math.

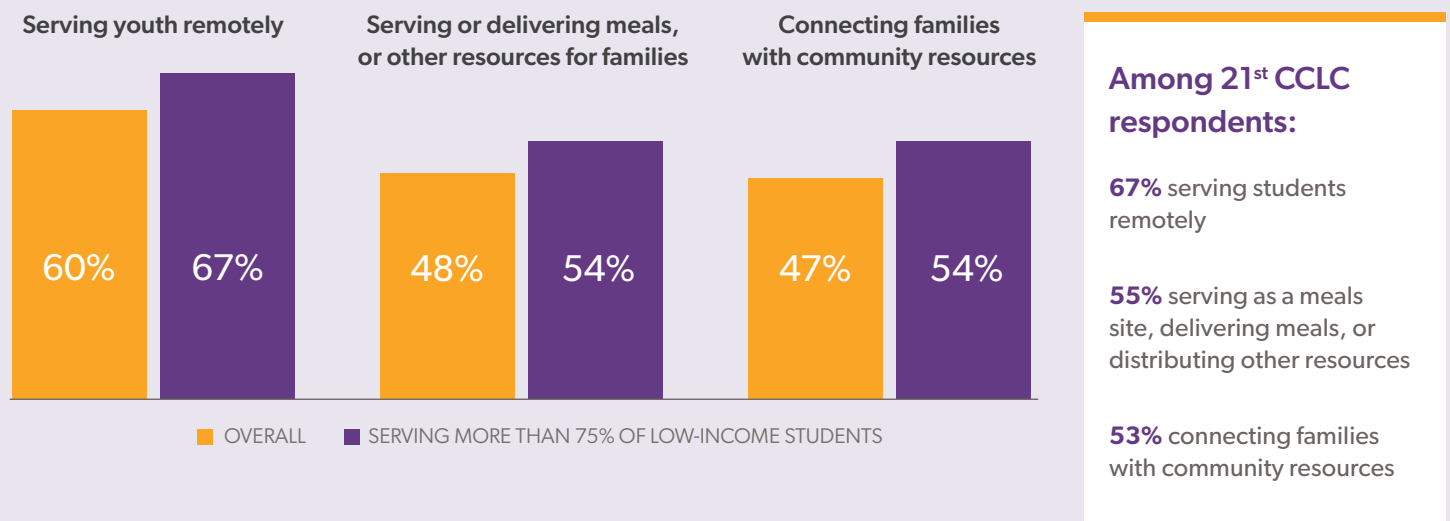
**A crisis of well-being.** A survey of youth ages 6 to 18 found that more than 1 in 5 reported that they were anxious (27 percent), stressed (23 percent), and unhappy (22 percent).

**Exacerbating existing disparities.** For instance, communities of color have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus, with death rates among Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx persons higher than that of white and Asian individuals. Regarding education, lower-income parents were much less likely than higher-income parents to report that their children had received some online instruction from their school since it closed (69 percent vs. 87 percent), and nine times more likely to say their child will not be able to complete their schoolwork because of lack of access to a computer at home (36 percent vs. 4 percent).

Read [How Afterschool is Supporting Learning and Recovery during COVID-19](#) to learn more.

## Afterschool programs supporting learning and recovery during COVID-19

A survey of 914 afterschool program providers conducted May 28-June 30, found that afterschool programs continue to provide critical supports in their communities during the pandemic, with programs serving high-need students and families especially active. **Overall, 70 percent of respondents report serving students in some capacity.**



Source: Online survey conducted by Edge Research on behalf of the Afterschool Alliance.

In planning for their summer programming, GCC is taking a similar approach, blending learning and creating opportunities that their students missed out on during the school year. Their summer programming's theme for 2020 is exploration, helping their students become more knowledgeable about their community through trips to Madison's parks, mural walks, bike rides, canoeing in the local creek, and an overall closer look at their city. Classes are much smaller, with students in groups of 10 to maintain social distancing, and GCC has instituted temperature checks, increased cleaning of classrooms and materials, and reinforced regular handwashing among students and staff.

### Program history

Founded in 1954, Goodman Community Center has grown to become the largest community center in Madison, providing programming to 36,000 children and adults in 2019 alone. GCC has continuously expanded its offerings, most recently introducing the Fit Youth Initiative, focused on physical activity and nutritional health; piloting an early childhood school readiness initiative that includes crisis therapy centers for families and teachers; and launching MASck (Men Always Seeking Change and Knowledge), a program to help boys become confident young men.

### Recommendations

#### to keep kids engaged in learning during COVID-19:

- ▶ Talk with your students and families to better understand their needs and enable your program to meet them where they are. Find out the ways in which students are learning during COVID-19, students' interests, and the resources that families need, and tailor your program's offerings accordingly to best serve your students and families.
- ▶ Take into consideration how kids spent their time during school closures and stay-at-home orders when developing programming for the summer and fall. Kids need time to be outside and explore their world, interact with one another, have fun, and be kids during a time that has heightened their stress and anxiety levels.



**Afterschool Alliance**

[afterschoolalliance.org](https://afterschoolalliance.org)