

21st Century Community Learning Centers was formerly a federally funded program that allowed schools to create and/or enhance afterschool programs. With the passing of “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,” ESEA Act, the 21st Century Community Learning Center program transitioned to state control and administration via a competitive grant process.

The purpose of the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant is to provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that:

- provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet State and local student performance standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics.
- offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs, that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.
- offer families of students served by community learning centers, opportunities for Literacy and related educational development.

Overview

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* recognizes that improved student achievement occurs when communities implement programs and strategies scientifically proven to be effective, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is an essential part of this initiative. Many communities are working together with new energy and inspiration to create a more positive future for their children and youth. Their focus is on constructive learning activities during non-school hours. With caring adult guidance, school and community-based academic and youth development programs result in greater achievement and social outcomes for children and youth.

Quality Afterschool Activities

Quality Afterschool programs can provide safe, engaging environments that complement the school day by promoting learning to improve student outcomes. While there is no one single formula for success in Afterschool programs, both practitioners and researchers have found that effective programs combine academic, enrichment, cultural, and recreational activities to guide learning and engage children and youth in wholesome activities. They also find that the best programs develop activities to meet the particular needs of the communities they serve.

The types of activities found in a quality Afterschool program include:

- Tutoring and supplementing instruction in basic skills, such as reading, math and science
- Drug and violence prevention curricula and counseling
- Youth leadership and character building activities

- Volunteer and community service opportunities
- College awareness and preparation
- Homework assistance centers
- Courses and enrichment in arts and culture
- Computer instruction
- Language instruction, including English as a second language
- Employment preparation or training
- Mentoring and service-learning
- Activities linked to law enforcement
- Supervised recreation and athletic programs and events.

According to the U.S. Department of Education publication *Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart Afterschool Programs*, there are nine components present in high-quality After-School programs. These include:

- Goal Setting, Strong Management, and Sustainability
- Quality After-School Staffing
- High Academic Standards
- Attention to Safety, Health, and Nutrition Issues
- Effective Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations, Juvenile Justice Agencies, Law Enforcement, and Youth Groups
- Strong Involvement of Families
- Enriching Learning Opportunities
- Linkages Between School-Day and Afterschool Personnel
- Evaluation of Program Progress and Effectiveness

Are there hours when a 21st CCLC must be open?

21st CCLC grant funded programs must be open a minimum of four (4) days per week and not less than 15 hours per week.

How does 21st CCLC fit within the broader context of a school’s improvement plan?

A 21st CCLC program can be an important component in a school’s improvement plan, particularly as it offers extended learning time to help children meet State and local academic standards. Local programs must ensure that the academic services they provide are aligned with the school’s curriculum in the core subject areas. It is equally important that the 21st CCLC program be a balanced and diversified program meeting the total needs of students.

Who is eligible to receive awards?

Funds will be provided only to the 21st CCLC s that primarily serve students from schools that qualify as high poverty, that is, schools with a student population with at least 40% eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. Any public or private organization is eligible to apply. Examples include, but are not limited to, non-profit agencies, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and for-profit corporations. The statute strongly encourages eligible organizations to work with LEAs when applying for funds. The statute also allows a consortium to apply.