

About the Impact of the 21st CCLC Program

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program is as complex and varied as the 1.5 million young people it serves nationwide. The 21st CCLC funding supports programming that ranges from small school-based centers (primarily providing academic supports and entirely funded by 21st CCLC dollars) to large multisite programs (offering comprehensive services, including academics, arts, and sports, and funded by a mix of public and private funds).

This variety makes evaluating the program's impact difficult. Sometimes, even determining the scope of the Community Learning Center intervention can be a puzzle. But American Institutes for Research (AIR) statewide evaluations of the 21st CCLC program in five states since 2008 help solve that puzzle.

So far, these five evaluations have turned up promising evidence that the program is working:

- Participating regularly in the 21st CCLC program was consistently associated with **higher state assessment scores in reading and mathematics**. The effects were small but consistent with expectations for an intervention lasting, on average, 10 hours per week.¹
- Students saw **gains in cumulative grade point average and in the number of credits earned toward graduation**.² High school participants saw particularly large gains. In one state, high school youth attending the program for at least 60 days were 97 percent more likely to be promoted to the next grade level than similar youth, in the same schools, who did not participate.³
- **School-day disciplinary referrals and absences fell**. For example, in one state, youth participating for 60 days or more during the school year had 70 percent fewer unexcused school-day absences and 72 percent fewer disciplinary incidents than similar youth, in the same schools, who did not participate.⁴
- In one state, the evaluation revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between greater attendance and **improvement in student motivation and attentiveness, prosocial behaviors, and homework completion and quality**.⁵ These outcomes, research shows, are connected to longer term academic and social success.⁶
- An AIR survey of state 21st CCLC directors revealed great breadth of activity related to improving the quality of 21st CCLC programming. Fully **70 percent of states provide grantees with ways to assess how well they are meeting quality criteria, identify areas for improvement, and craft improvement plans**.⁷

AIR is not the only organization looking at the 21st CCLC program's impacts on youth outcomes. The Afterschool Alliance compiled an evaluation roundup,⁸ sharing findings from dozens of studies showing results similar to those outlined here. Going forward, AIR will continue to explore nationwide program effects and, with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, is conducting a meta-analysis of 21st CCLC evaluations of the program's impact.

So what does all this tell us? Despite the difficulty in measuring program effectiveness, multiple studies in multiple states and across years have found positive outcomes for young people participating in the 21st CCLC program. Given research on the connection between high quality and outcomes,⁹ the recent focus of states on quality improvement is an indication that more positive impacts are to come.

Endnotes

1. Naftzger, N., Nistler, M., Manzeske, D., Swanlund, A., Shields, J., Rapaport, A., et al. (2013). *Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Year 2 evaluation report*. Naperville, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=3546&menu_id=814; Naftzger, N., Vinson, M., Liu, F., Zhu, B., & Foley, K. (2014). *Washington 21st Century Community Learning Centers program evaluation: Year 2*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/21stCenturyLearning/pubdocs/14-1167WA21CCLCFinalYear2Report-ed.pdf>; Naftzger, N., Vinson, M., Manzeske, D., & Gibbs, C. (2011). *New Jersey 21st Century Community Learning Centers impact report: 2009–10*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at <http://www.nj.gov/education/students/safety/afterschool/eval/cclcimpact/0910/Report.pdf>; Vinson, M., Marchand, J., Sparr, M., & Moroney, D. (2013). *Rhode Island 21st Century Community Learning Center program evaluation: Evaluation report 2011–12*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Educational-Programming/21stCCLCs/RI21stCCLC-Impact-Report-2011-12.pdf>.
2. Naftzger, N., Vinson, M., Liu, F., Zhu, B., & Foley, K. (2014). *Washington 21st Century Community Learning Centers program evaluation: Year 2*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/21stCenturyLearning/pubdocs/14-1167WA21CCLCFinalYear2Report-ed.pdf>.
3. Naftzger, N., Nistler, M., Manzeske, D., Swanlund, A., Shields, J., Rapaport, A., et al. (2013). *Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Year 2 evaluation report*. Naperville, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=3546&menu_id=814.
4. Vinson, M., Marchand, J., Sparr, M., & Moroney, D. (2013). *Rhode Island 21st Century Community Learning Center program evaluation: Evaluation report 2011–12*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Educational-Programming/21stCCLCs/RI21stCCLC-Impact-Report-2011-12.pdf>.
5. Naftzger, N., Vinson, M., Manzeske, D., & Gibbs, C. (2011). *New Jersey 21st Century Community Learning Centers impact report: 2009–10*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research. Available at <http://www.nj.gov/education/students/safety/afterschool/eval/cclcimpact/0910/Report.pdf>.
6. Farrington, C. A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T. S., Johnson, D. W., et al. (2012). *Teaching adolescents to become learners: The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance—A critical literature review*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research. Available at <https://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Noncognitive%20Report.pdf>.
7. Naftzger, N., Devaney, E., & Newman, J. (forthcoming). *Initial report on the national scan of 21st CCLC data, impact, and quality improvement systems project*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research.
8. Afterschool Alliance. (2015). *Evaluations backgrounder: A summary of formal evaluations of afterschool programs' impact on academics, behavior, safety and family life*. Available at http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Evaluation_Backgrounder.pdf.
9. Pierce, K. M., Auger, A., & Vandell, D. L. (2013, April). *Narrowing the achievement gap: Consistency and intensity of structured activities during elementary school*. Paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, Seattle, WA.

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