



Invest in Children and Teens: Support Funding for Afterschool Programming and Community Schools

Testimony before the Illinois State Board of Education Budget Committee

Submitted by Susan Stanton on behalf of the ACT Now Coalition, November 16, 2018

The ACT Now Coalition is a statewide organization that works to ensure that young people in Illinois have access to quality and affordable afterschool and youth development programs. We believe that an increased commitment to young people beyond the traditional school day is a crucial part of their growth into healthy and productive individuals. ACT Now is a diverse coalition supported by Illinois families, educators, business leaders, community advocates, youth organizations, and policymakers from across the state. The ACT Now Coalition has recently taken on the advocacy of the former Federation of Community Schools because our organization acknowledges that this work is essential to the success of youth, schools, and communities in Illinois.

A. Our Ask

On behalf of our over 1,500 members, we ask that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) include in its FY20 budget \$20 million for afterschool program funding, which ISBE can use to serve approximately 200 new program sites at \$100,000 per site in the lowest performing districts in Illinois. This item was included in ISBE's budget recommendation last year. We also ask that ISBE continue to recommend \$15 million for the Healthy Communities Investment Grants program, as it have done the past two years. Additionally, we ask that you include a new \$15 million dollar line item to support community schools in Illinois.

We are excited to discuss the successes of afterschool programs and community schools in Illinois, but we also hope ISBE uses funding for these programs in an effective way. For the last few years, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC or 21st Century) grantees have experienced a lack of communication with ISBE and many delays in receiving their continuing applications and grants. These inconsistencies make it difficult to run an effective program and appropriately serve the youth in Illinois. We ask that ISBE take this into consideration in administering its programs and grant the FY15 cohort for 21st Century a continuation as soon as possible.

B. Background on Afterschool Programs in Illinois

In Illinois, we already have successful afterschool programs in 21st Century, administered by ISBE, and the Teen REACH program, administered by the Department of Human Services. Many of these programs use this funding to support community schools. Afterschool programs and out of school supports, like 21st Century and Teen REACH, are critical for the success of children, families, and communities all across Illinois. Afterschool programs make learning fun, provide a safe and welcoming environment for youth, and support the workforce of today and tomorrow.

1. Academic Growth

Students across Illinois are learning and growing in afterschool programs. Studies show that programs are sparking students' interest in school leading to better school attendance, grades, standardized test scores,

and behavior.¹ Data shows that 21st Century, improves academic outcomes for students. In the 2015-2016 school year, 64 percent of elementary students and 59 percent of middle/high school students improved their academic performance.² Surveys of 21st CCLC participants' teachers indicated that 57 percent of elementary students and 50 percent of middle/high school students improved class attendance.³ The Teen REACH program in Illinois also provides concrete evidence of the benefits of afterschool programs. 99.3 percent of Teen REACH high school seniors graduate as opposed to the statewide average of only 86 percent of high school seniors.⁴ Further, data collected from Teen REACH sites shows that 73 percent of Teen REACH youth improved school attendance, and 93 percent of Teen REACH students improved their grades within a year.⁵

Outside of the data produced by the stellar afterschool programs in Illinois, these programs are providing fun and engaging opportunities for learning that there are not always time for during the school day. In the 21st Century program, grantees offer the following programming:

- 90 percent offer arts programming
- 87 percent offer opportunities for career exploration
- 61 percent offer service learning
- 93 percent of elementary, 95 percent of middle school, and 85 percent of high school grantees offer STEM programming.⁶

Students are inspired to learn through these types of activities, which is translating to positive outcomes in the school day as well.

2. Promoting Safety

Afterschool programs also provide a safe haven and help dissuade youth from engaging in risky behaviors on and offline. Studies have found that participants in afterschool programs are 30 percent less likely to participate in criminal activities.⁷ Teachers of 21st CCLC participants reported a 58 percent improvement in elementary and a 52 percent improvement in high school participants' behavior, such as a decrease in aggressive behaviors and fights.⁸ Further, in Illinois, 99.85 percent of youth in Teen REACH programs were safe from violence during program hours.⁹ According to the Afterschool Alliance's America After 3PM report, 82 percent of parents are satisfied with the safe environment of their child's afterschool

¹ Durlak, J.A. & Weissberg R.P. (2010). *Afterschool programs that follow evidence-based practices to promote social and emotional development are effective*. Retrieved from http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/Durlak&Weissberg_Final.pdf.

² Goodyear, L., Mansori, S., Cox, J., & Rodriguez S. (2017). *Illinois state board of education 21st Century Community Learning Centers program: State level program evaluation year 2015-2016*. Retrieved from https://www.isbe.net/Documents/statewide_report_1516.pdf.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Illinois Department of Human Services. (n.d.). *Teen responsibility, education, achievement, caring, and hope (Teen REACH)*. Retrieved from <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30777>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Goodyear, Mansori, Cox, & Rodriguez, 2016.

⁷ Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *Taking a deeper dive into afterschool: Positive outcomes and promising practices*. Retrieved from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper_Dive_into_Afterschool.pdf.

⁸ Goodyear, Mansori, Cox, & Rodriguez, 2016.

⁹ Illinois Department of Human Services, n.d., *Teen responsibility, education, achievement, caring, and hope (Teen REACH)*.

program.¹⁰ These programs foster a safe and welcoming environment, which can also prevent engagement in things like cyberbullying and the overuse of technology.

3. *Supporting the Workforce*

Moreover, afterschool programs are fostering the workforce of today and tomorrow in Illinois. According to America After 3PM, 433,390 children in Illinois are left alone and unsupervised between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.¹¹ In Illinois, 73 percent of parents agree that afterschool programs help parents to keep their jobs.¹² Further, when parents have quality afterschool choices, they do not have to focus on whether their children are being supervised after school or coordinate rides for their kids. Parental concern about afterschool time currently costs companies between \$50 and \$300 billion in healthcare and lost job productivity each year.¹³

Afterschool programs can help prepare the future workforce of Illinois by teaching career skills, exposing youth to new careers, and inspiring youth to reach their full potential. Afterschool and summer learning programs teach leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, responsibility, and time management, which youth need to be successful in the workforce. Studies show that cognitive skills such as these are significantly more important in determining economic outcomes than school attainment.¹⁴ Many afterschool programs also assist youth with the college application process by taking them on visits to college campuses, working with students and families to identify prospective colleges, providing assistance in the college application process, helping families navigate the financial assistance process, and providing encouragement and support to students who do not see themselves as college material. The afterschool hours also offer time for apprenticeships, guest speakers, and project-based activities that build workforce skills.¹⁵ These activities, which many schools do not have the time and resources to provide, are key to helping students become college and career ready and make a successful transition after high school.¹⁶

C. Background on Community Schools in Illinois

An important use of the 21st Century funding in Illinois is for community schools. Community schools are both places and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. These relationships focus on not just academics, but also health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement, which leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.¹⁷ Using public schools as a hub, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. The

¹⁰ Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *America after 3PM: Illinois*. Retrieved from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/detail.html#s/IL/demand/p_of_children_in_programs_2014.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Brandeis University. (2006). *After-school worries: Tough on parents, bad for business*. Retrieved from <http://www.brandeis.edu/barnett/research/docs/PCAST-report.pdf>.

¹⁴ Afterschool Alliance. (2009). *Afterschool: Opening doors to work and careers*. Retrieved from <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Workforce%20Brief%2036%20FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁵ Afterschool Alliance. (2011). *Afterschool: Supporting career and college pathways for middle school age youth*. Retrieved from http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/issue_briefs/issue_collegeCareer_46.pdf.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Coalition for Community Schools. (n.d.) *What is a community school?* Retrieved from http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what_is_a_community_school.aspx.

national Coalition of Community Schools uses the metaphor of a phone to explain the model.¹⁸ Most people think of schools as serving a single purpose: to teach; similarly, landline telephones are used for one purpose: to make phone calls. Community schools are more like smart phones: children and families have a wide variety of supports all with the same access points, just like how smart phones can help you not only make phone calls but also take pictures, help you pay your bills, catch up on work, or find a local restaurant.

In Illinois, and in the Chicagoland area especially, many 21st Century grantees are also full-service community schools. These partnerships work with local human services and youth development agencies to offer a variety of services, like parent programming, counseling, access to social services resources in addition to afterschool programming. Teachers and principals in Illinois have attributed the community schools model to students' improvement in grades, homework, and behavior.¹⁹ Students who attend a community school but are not in the afterschool program still have access to these services. This means community schools stretch those 21st Century dollars to serve thousands of additional youth.

Further, a report by the National Education Policy Center and the Learning Policy Institute found that sufficient evidence meeting ESSA's criteria for "evidence-based" approaches exists to justify including community schools as part of targeted and comprehensive interventions in high-poverty schools.²⁰ Relying on evidence from initiatives all across the country, the report highlights the ways in which community schools foster the conditions for school improvement and remove the nonacademic barriers that often impede academic achievement and positive youth development.²¹ The report underscores, however, that in order for the community school model to achieve its full promise as a school improvement strategy, schools and community partners must implement the model with fidelity and focus on shared leadership and continuous improvement.²² By creating a state-level community school program through a line in ISBE's FY20 budget, the state can provide technical assistance and capacity building, standardize expectations for grantees' work, and evaluate progress and share out best practices.

D. The Need for More Afterschool Programs and Community Schools and Return on Investment

Additional funding is necessary for afterschool programming for Illinois' children and youth because families across Illinois want their students in an afterschool program, but a lack of space in existing programs prevents parents from enrolling their children. America After 3PM reported that 741,400 children in Illinois, or 41 percent of children in Illinois, would participate in an afterschool program if one were available.²³ As of 2014, only 18 percent of Illinois children were lucky enough to have a placement in an afterschool program.²⁴

The current funding streams for afterschool in Illinois are not enough to fill this need. In 2014, the Illinois State Board of Education received 142 21st Century applications requesting a total of \$53 million but were

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The Federation for Community Schools. (2013). Making an impact: Community Schools in Illinois. Retrieved from <http://www.ilcommunityschools.org/images/files/Making%20An%20Impact-Community%20Schools%20In%20Illinois%285%29.pdf>.

²⁰ Oakes, J., Maier, A., & Daniel, J. (2017). Community schools: An evidence-based strategy for equitable school improvement. Retrieved from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/equitable-community-schools>.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Afterschool Alliance, 2014, *America after 3PM: Illinois*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

only able to award grants to 87 applicants for a total of \$33 million.²⁵ Not only will these programs move the needle in areas of need in our state, but they will also save money in the long-term. By increasing kids' earning potential, improving academic achievement, and reducing juvenile crime and delinquency, afterschool saves up to \$9 for every \$1 invested.²⁶

Moreover, creating partnerships that enable families to access supports and services through community schools can yield a \$1 to \$3 return on investments. The kinds of collaborations that a community school line in ISBE's FY20 budget would fund would also be mobilized to seek and access additional funding to support implementing the strategies they develop. A \$15 million state investment in community schools would yield another \$15 to \$45 million in leveraged resources.

The evidence demonstrates that afterschool programming and community schools are winning models that achieve real results for our students. We ask that ISBE make these investments to move the needle for the children, families, and communities that need them most.

²⁵ Illinois State Board of Education. (2014). *Illinois State Board of Education awards \$33 million to support before- and after-school enrichment programs: Eighty-seven applicants receive 21st Century Community Learning Center grants*. Retrieved from <https://www.isbe.net/Lists/News/NewsDisplay.aspx?ID=207>.

²⁶ Brown, W. O., Frates, S. B., Rudge, S. B., Rudge, I. S., & Tradewell, R. L. (2002). *The costs and benefits of afterschool programs: The estimated effects of the afterschool education and safety program act of 2002*. Retrieved from http://www.middlechildhoodmatters.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/claremontmckenna_CostsandBenefits.pdf.