



Illinois State Board of Education

100 West Randolph Street, Suite 14-300 • Chicago, Illinois 60601-3283
www.isbe.net

James T. Meeks
Chairman

Tony Smith, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

July 11, 2017

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services
Education Appropriations Subcommittee
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen and Cole and Ranking Members Lowey and DeLauro:

I am writing today to urge that funding levels for fiscal year 2018 be protected for programs under Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and be aligned to the amounts originally authorized under the law. This is the first year of implementation of the new law and we need the support of Congress to meet the challenges and high ideals expected of all of us under ESSA.

Title IV, Part A, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, was authorized at 1.6 billion for fiscal year 2018 and appropriated at \$400 million as part of the recent Omnibus. The President's budget calls for elimination of funding for this new grant program which when drafted by Congress consolidated 57 individual programs under the No Child Left Behind, including 1.34 billion in appropriations which previously supported such programs as: Advanced Placement fees for low income students, Education Technology grants, Parent Information and Resource Centers and Foreign Language Assistancess.

The new grant program established under ESSA to support activities that provide students with a well-rounded education, ensure safe and supportive learning environments and increase the use of technology. These services are needed in the schools in Illinois and around the country. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has worked over the past 18 months building Illinois' ESSA State Plan which has deepened ISBE's relationships with the field and crystallized ISBE's

definition of quality education. The interconnected environments of a child's life create a continuum of learning. Quality education recognizes and strengthens the connections between students' cognitive, physical, social, and emotional health and between students' overlapping environments in the home, school, and community. Quality education supports the whole child as she or he develops from preschool through high school and on to college and career. The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant provides a nexus to support this critical work.

It is equally important to maintain funding for our high quality afterschool programs. Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Programs was authorized under ESSA at a 1.1 billion dollars. The President' budget calls for elimination of this critical program. 398 schools in Illinois currently implement 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) programs. The positive results of these programs include:

- 63% of elementary students improved with respect to behaving well in class and coming to school motivated to learn.
- 55% of middle and high school students improved with respect to behaving well in class, and 53% improved with respect to coming to school motivated to learn
- 26.2% of elementary students improved in mathematics, and 30.7% improved in reading.
- 27.1% of middle/high school students improved in mathematics, and 29.7% improved in reading.

These programs provide an important source of supports and services for our students. Without funding for 21st Century, over 50,000 students in Illinois will lose out on essential learning opportunities that help them prepare for school, college, and careers. Our local educators express the need for this program best in their own words:

21st Century Community Learning Center is integral to the social emotional and academic growth of Urbana School District 116 students. For 13 consecutive years the Urbana Middle School (UMS) 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) has provided 26 weeks of before and after school enrichment, academic support, social skills, fitness and healthy living classes on an average of 400 students yearly which is nearly half of the student body. This program provides valuable opportunities for the students while helping to create a safe, healthy and stable school-wide environment that encourages the exploration of a variety of educational offerings while helping prepare students for success in high school and future high-demand occupations. The UMS program has become a critical part of the total educational program of Urbana Middle School serving diverse groups of students reflective of the student body.

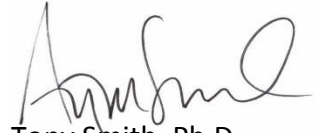
- Donald D. Owen, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Urbana School District #116

We know more of these innovative, effective uses are being developed throughout the state. We cannot remove this critical funding. We are working hard as we transition to ESSA. It is

critical to fund education programs at the levels authorized in this new federal law so that Illinois can implement it with fidelity in the manner in which Congress intended.

Additional testimonials are attached. The Illinois education community is passionate and committed to providing a high quality education to the students in Illinois and we need your support to meet that goal. We look forward to working with you to ensure that education funding is restored to ensure education equity for the students in Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Smith', written over a light gray rectangular background.

Tony Smith, Ph.D.

State Superintendent of Education

**21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)
Urbana Middle School (UMS), Urbana, IL**

21st Century Community Learning Center is integral to the social emotional and academic growth of Urbana School District 116 students. For 13 consecutive years the Urbana Middle School (UMS) 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) has provided 26 weeks of before and after school enrichment, academic support, social skills, fitness and healthy living classes on an average of 400 students yearly which is nearly half of the student body. This program provides valuable opportunities for the students while helping to create a safe, healthy and stable school-wide environment that encourages the exploration of a variety of educational offerings while helping prepare students for success in high school and future high-demand occupations. The UMS program has become a critical part of the total educational program of Urbana Middle School serving diverse groups of students reflective of the student body.

Participant characteristics:

- A. Low income students, qualifying for free or reduced lunch
- B. Minority students, including the growing Latino population and immigrant population
- C. Students receiving various support services due to a history of truancy
- D. Students identified by the school social worker and psychologist for social and emotional support
- E. Homeless students
- F. Special Education students
- G. Students from other marginalized populations seeking support

21st CCLC Demographics

UMS Enrollment: 915

2015-2016

UMS 21st CCLC Enrollment 314 / 34%

English Learners	20	6%	American Indian /Alaskan Native	1	.3%
Free and Reduced	205	62%	Asian	19	6%
Special Needs	53	17%	Black or African American	106	34%
Male	155	49%	Hispanic/Latino	39	12%
Female	159	51%	Native Hawaiian	0	%
Two or More Races	19	6%	White	130	41%

1. How have the academic performance and/or behavior of students participating in 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs improved?

- Surveyed teachers report that students who consistently attend the program participate and volunteer more in class.

21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Urbana Middle School (UMS), Urbana, IL

- Surveyed parents report that their students have the opportunity to interact with other students and that their child is better at making friends and behaving more appropriately at school because of 21st CCLC attendance.
- In addition to the perceived value to parents, students and staff noted in the yearly surveys, program sessions have become prescribed interventions for struggling students. The program offers a time for students to receive a double-dose of content taught during the school day.
- Academic classes and homework lab are recommended to parents during conferences for students struggling with their grades. Counselors prescribe the 21st CCLC courses for students at risk of retention or attending summer school. Teachers recommend the program for students in need of social and emotional support and more social connections. Parents view the 21st CCLC program benefits students. 93% of parents believe their child completes homework more often and 96% believe their child behaves better in school.

2. How does 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding serve as a backbone or magnet to bring additional other resources into the school?

- The UMS 21st CCLC has been the core program for many community satellite classes that operated under the UMS program umbrella. EYE to EYE from the University of Illinois focused on preparing students with learning disabilities for success and goal setting in a college. Minecraft was offered by the U of I math department. The Girl Scouts and Principal Scholars also used the UMS program at their satellite locations gaining stronger attendance by students.
- The UMS 21st CCLC also partnered with the University on other classes, U of I Cooperative Extension, C-U Rotary, University of Illinois Center for Small and Urban Communities, Dr. G's Brain Games and the C-U Safe Routes to school project.
- The 21st CCLC program has shown tremendous growth in student attendance and class offerings, and rapidly become a positive support of the community due to its collaborative efforts to maintain funding and to keep the community informed. The sustainability of the program has been possible because of the continual commitment of District leadership.
- Program leadership has spent large amounts of time presenting their long range plans to a variety of potential donors and stakeholders: Illinois State Board of Education, Urbana Board of Education, City of Urbana and Urbana Park District. Over the years the program developers have sought and been granted limited additional funding through community and individual grant opportunities.

3. How do 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs help prepare students for high demand occupations?

- The 21st CCLC program at UMS allows time for students to interact with a variety of students from a wealth of cultures. These interactions lead to a deeper racial equity understanding, which is a critical attribute for occupational success.

**21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)
Urbana Middle School (UMS), Urbana, IL**

- 94% of surveyed parents report their child is more interested in school because of improved program attendance. Those students who remain in school are best prepared for an occupation.
- The STEM classes offered at UMS were all designed for occupations within the science, technology and math fields.
- Many of the classes offered focused on the problem solving, social and organizational skills necessary to be successful in the workplace.

4. How do 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs contribute to the health, safety and stability of the wider school community?

- Signs of the program are visible throughout the hallways. An entire double classroom is designated to house the program, creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all program students. 87% of attendees report feeling safe while attending the program.
- Students who attend the after-school activities have the opportunities to work with a variety of school staff that they wouldn't necessarily meet during the regular school day. Anytime students get to better know more staff it creates a more supportive school environment. 91% of students state having a positive relationship with staff working in the program.
- Without the 21st CCLC program almost one half of the UMS student body would be at home or unsupervised within the town. The program provides direct assistance with homework, organizational skills, social skills, or being challenged by gaining new information in the arts, technology, science, performance arts, culinary arts and the many other classes offered to UMS students. 90% of students enjoy attending the program.

**21st Century Community Learning Centers
Urbana Elementary Schools
Leal Elementary, Dr. Preston Williams, Jr Elementary, Martin Luther King Elementary**

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers elementary school program is a conduit between the 21st CCLC programs at the Urbana Middle School and Urbana High School. The program at all three educational levels is similar in structure but each designed to enhance the developmental stage, skills, and interests of its participants. The program has become an integral part of the District culture and is sought out by parents and students.

The elementary school 21st CCLC offers afterschool programming for children in grades first-fifth. The students attending the program at all three elementary sites are a diverse mix of students from an array of backgrounds and experiences. The students sign up for the program because of the many enrichment opportunities, academic supports, STEM, technology, and art classes. The overarching goal of the Urbana Elementary School 21st CCLC program is to improve academic performance, refine behavioral issues, and become an important part of the school community.

SPLASH Demographics

ML King, Dr. P. Williams, Leal, 1205 2015-2016 SPLASH Enrollment 386/32%
Student Participation 30+ Days = Students 173/ 45%

English Learners	124	32%	American Indian	8	2%
Free and Reduced	351	90%	Asian	37	10%
Special Needs	63	16%	Black	189	49%
Male	169	43%	Hispanic / Latino	58	15%
Female	217	56%	White	61	16%
Native Hawaiian	N/A		Two or More Races	33	8%

1. How have the academic performance and/or behavior of students participating in 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs improved?

- According to teacher surveys, students involved in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program have improved their homework completion, willingness to participate in class, and get along with their peers better.
- This program exposes students to new educational and social opportunities to work with other students and staff in an engaging atmosphere.
- The 30 minutes of homework help has been a great tool for classroom teachers to communicate to program staff members about the students who need help with homework completion and specific skills. This creates a team effort.
- Many of our program staff are bilingual speakers giving our second language students the necessary resources to help individuals with any language needs.

2. How does 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding serve as a backbone or magnet to bring additional other resources into the school?

- Future teachers from the University of Illinois and Parkland College gain experience by volunteering with the program.
- The Urbana Park District and Prairie Center Health Systems provide academic, behavioral, fitness and healthy mind classes.
- Program students attend multiple educational field trips throughout the year to visit the community resources around them.

3. How do 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs help prepare students for high demand occupations?

**21st Century Community Learning Centers
Urbana Elementary Schools**

Leal Elementary, Dr. Preston Williams, Jr Elementary, Martin Luther King Elementary

- Because this program is an extension of the school day even elementary students have the opportunity to challenge themselves and to create a work ethic that will carry through to college and the workforce.
- Through the STEM, students are exposed to both career options and healthy hobbies that may otherwise remain unknown.
- The opportunities offered through the program allow all students to enter the workforce at a more level playing field.
- The 21st CCLC program at the elementary buildings allows time for students to interact with a variety of students from a wealth of cultures. These interactions lead to a deeper racial equity understanding, which is a critical attribute for occupational success.

4. How do 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs contribute to the health, safety and stability of the wider school community?

- The elementary programs partner with the Prairie Center Health Systems that teaches students about health and safety. The program offerings help the students to better understand how to make healthy life choices.
- Program coordinators report an increase in staff and student connections. There are numerous personal conversations, special handshakes, newly created trust and genuine human connections that cross racial barriers
- Making these genuine connections with students is the most important thing teachers can do to make a student feel safe and able to work to his/her fullest potential with confidence and high self-esteem.

Parent Comments:

- I hope the program continues next school year. (DPW)
- Staff very friendly and kind. My daughter really enjoyed coming to the group.
- I am very grateful my daughter could participate. I wish there were more science activities.
- The second session was way better than first because there was more time to get the kids moving and having choice.
- I love this program.

Teacher Survey:

- Over the past three years teachers have seen an increase in students' ability to get along with other. (King)
- There is 12% increase in students behaving in class. (King)
- Students are coming to class better prepared. (King)
- No teachers indicate a decline in student behavior or academic performance.
- 100% of teachers felt that program students volunteer for extra responsibilities, attend class regularly, complete homework to teacher satisfaction. (Leal)

Student Comments:

- The program is amazing! (Leal)
- It's fun and I enjoyed it with my friend and my sister. (Leal)
- I loved it and will be doing it in middle school. (Leal)
- SPLASH Jr. is so much fun. I love it. The teachers are so good and care about kids. (Leal)
- I love the 21st. Thank you for teaching me what I need to know. Thank you for being kind. (King)
- I love the science club also the math club. It is the best program I've been in, so far. (King)

Program Coordinator Comments:

- Students tell me that it is nice to have a place to be able to do their homework and have an adult to help them with it because they do not always receive that help at home.
- Students have mentioned that they have made new friends in the afterschool program that they would not normally make in the regular classroom or during the regular school day.
- Students love getting time to work in the computer lab and picking their own clubs and classes.

East St. Louis School District 189 - East St. Louis, Illinois

By eliminating Title II and 21st Century Community Learning Centers fund, **East St. Louis would lose approximately \$2.4 million annually for essential after-school and teacher support services.**



Eliminating Title II funds means...

- **Eliminating 15 teachers**, resulting in higher classroom sizes (more than 30 per class)
- **Eliminating teacher mentorship program** and 65 teacher mentor stipends
 - *First year teachers will be less supported and less successful. Teacher mentorship programs improve first year teaching and aid in overall teacher retention.*
- Decrease or elimination of successful staff recruitment and retention efforts (like job fairs)
- Cutting back significantly on professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators alike (including workshop, conference and training costs and travel expenses)

Eliminating funds for 21st Century Community Learning Center programs means...

- **Cutting afterschool programming for 660 students, grades 2-12**
 - *21st Century programs in District 189 provide small group time with classroom teachers, evening meals, field trips and additional educational enrichment activities (robotics, art, etc.)*
 - These programs...
 - Improve student confidence
 - Increase MAP scores (in one elementary school alone, saw a 52% increase in reading and 50% increase in math in one year for those in the program)
 - Provide a safe space to be after school in a highly violent community
- **In the words of 21st Century Community Learning Center program students...**
 - *"It helps me with **reading** and **math** skills and educational things and more. The 21st century program helps me work well with my **peers**."*
 - *"This program has helped my family because I eat **dinner** at the program, so my mom doesn't have to make dinner"*
 - *"The program has helped me get **better grades** on my report card."*
 - *"I don't have any help with **homework** once I get home. The teachers are willing to help me and I need a **quiet** place to work on homework and projects and I don't have a **computer** or **internet access** at home."*

To cut the funding supports for Title II and 21st Century Community Learning Centers within the East St. Louis School District would be a **strike against educational social justice**. School District 189 serves 6,100 students in grades preschool through 12th grade. Nearly all East St. Louis students enter school at-risk for academic failure due to extreme poverty; 100% of students qualify for free/reduced price lunch. According to the 2016 Illinois School Report Card, over **99% of students are low income**, 7% were categorized as homeless (underreported), **97.5% of students are African-American and 1.5% are Hispanic**. The percentage of students with a **diagnosed disability (qualifying for special education services) is 15.3%**.

A high percentage of East St. Louis children and youth have a history of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Because our children have deep environmental and family challenges, **more supports and services are required for them to be successful academically** and in the school environment. However, the East St. Louis School District lacks the resources to provide the basic necessities for academics, let alone enrichment and support services. East St Louis School District is among the **most impoverished school districts** in the State of Illinois. Currently less than 10% of the annual district revenue comes from local property taxes and East St Louis has one of the highest tax rates in Illinois at 10.83%. Local revenue cannot sustain this school district. The community's lack of property wealth creates an almost total reliance on state and federal funding as well as competitive grants. A further reduction in federal support will result in **fewer students making academic gains** and may directly correlate toward **increasing the school to prison pipeline** for students within our community.