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*21st Century Community Learning Centers: An Overview of
the Program and Analysis of Reauthorization Issues*

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Updated January 22, 2002

Abstract. Twenty-first Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) are after school, weekend, and summer programs that are set up by public schools or consortia of public schools. The Centers use public school buildings in rural and inner city communities to provide educational, recreational, cultural, health and social services to all community members. This report looks at issues likely to arise as reauthorization of the program is considered.

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21st Century Community Learning Centers: A History of the Program

Updated January 22, 2002

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21st Century Community Learning Centers: An Overview of the Program and Analysis of Reauthorization Issues

Summary

Twenty-first Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), originally authorized by Title X, Part I, as amended, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, are after-school, weekend, and summer programs that are set up by public schools or consortia of public schools. The Centers utilize public school buildings in rural and inner-city communities to provide educational, recreational, cultural, health and social services to all community members.

Authorization of the 21st CCLC program expired at the end of FY2000; however, the program received funding of \$845.614 million for FY2001. The program was reauthorized in H.R. 1, the No Child Left Behind Act. The President signed H.R. 1 into law (P.L. 107-110) on January 8, 2002. The newly reauthorized program was funded at \$1 billion for FY2002. This report provides an overview of the 21st CCLC as originally authorized; the program as reauthorized is discussed in CRS Report RL31240, *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Background and Funding*.

Grantees were selected on a competitive basis by ED. Grants were awarded to inner-city and rural elementary, middle, and secondary public schools or consortia of such schools (or local education agencies acting in their behalf). Grants were awarded for a period not to exceed 3 years and in amounts of not less than \$35,000 per year. In FY2000, the average grant was approximately \$500,000, and supported four centers. Funds were required to be equitably distributed among urban and rural areas across the nation, and among the states (and among rural and urban areas within states). The 21st CCLC projects had to include at least four out of a list of 13 authorized activities.

During Congress's consideration of the program's reauthorization, several questions about the program were raised: (1) What is, or should be, the program's primary purpose? (2) Has the program grown too large and has its implementation caused it to stray from the intent of the authorizing legislation? (3) Would the program be more effective if more funding decisions occurred at the community level? (4) Does it duplicate other federal programs? (5) Does the current method of allocating funds sufficiently ensure equitable distribution? And, (6) How can the program's performance and accountability best be measured?

Contents

Introduction	1
Funding History	3
Competitive Priorities for Grant Applicants	5
Reauthorization Issues	5
Legislation in the 107 th Congress	7
Legislation in the 106 th Congress	8

List of Tables

Table 1. 21 st Century Learning Centers: Funding History	3
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21st Century Community Learning Centers: An Overview of the Program and Analysis of Reauthorization Issues

Introduction

As originally authorized, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) were after-school, weekend and summer programs that were set up by public schools or consortia of public schools, in rural and inner-city communities, to provide educational, recreational, cultural, health, and social services to all community members. The 21st CCLC program was authorized by Title X, Part I, as amended, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and is administered by the Department of Education (ED). The amendment authorizing the 21st CCLC program was included as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, P.L. 103-382. This report provides an overview and history of the program as originally authorized; it will not be updated. For information on the reauthorized program, see CRS Report RL31240, *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Background and Funding*.

The 21st CCLC program was authorized for 5 years, FY1995-FY1999.¹ The 21st CCLC program was not reauthorized in the 106th Congress, and consequently its authorization expired at the end of FY2000. However, the program received funding of \$845.614 million for FY2001. The program was reauthorized in H.R. 1, the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law (P.L. 107-110) on January 8, 2002.

The original authorizing legislation authorized \$20 million for the program for FY1995, and “such sums as may be necessary for each of the 4 succeeding fiscal years. ...”² The authorizing legislation specified that priority be given to applications that: “offer a broad selection of services which address the needs of the community.” It encouraged public schools that establish these centers to:

collaborate with other public and nonprofit agencies and organizations, local businesses, educational entities (such as vocational and adult education programs, school-to-work programs, community colleges, and universities), recreational, cultural, and other community and human service entities, for the purpose of meeting the needs of, and expanding the opportunities available to, the residents of the communities served by such schools ...³

¹Section 422 of the General Education Provisions Act provides an automatic 1 year extension authority to all ED programs.

²20 U.S.C. 8247.

³20 U.S.C. 8241.

Grantees were selected on a competitive basis by ED. Grants were awarded to inner-city and rural elementary, middle and secondary public schools or consortia of such schools (or local education agencies acting in their behalf).⁴ Grants were awarded for a period not to exceed 3 years and in amounts of not less than \$35,000 per year. In FY2000, the average grant was approximately \$500,000, and supported four centers. Funds were required to be equitably distributed among urban and rural areas across the nation and, among the states (and among rural and urban areas within states). The 21st CCLC projects had to include at least four of the following activities:

1. Literacy education programs;
2. Senior Citizen programs;
3. Children's day care services;
4. Integrated education, health, social service, recreational, or cultural programs;
5. Summer and weekend school programs in conjunction with recreation programs;
6. Nutrition and health programs;
7. Expanded library service hours to serve community needs;
8. Telecommunications and technology education programs for individuals of all ages;
9. Parenting skills education programs;
10. Support and training for child day care providers;
11. Employment counseling, training, and placement;
12. Services for individuals who leave school before graduating from secondary school, regardless of the age of such individual; and
13. Services for individuals with disabilities.⁵

The 21st CCLC program grew dramatically, as evidenced by the program's funding trajectory from \$750,000 in FY1995 to \$845,614,000 in FY2001 (see **Table 1**).⁶ ED received approximately 2,253 applications for FY2000 21st CCLC grants. ED says that FY2000 21st CCLC funds served approximately 615,000 children and 215,000 adults.

The program shifted in emphasis as the amount appropriated for the program increased. The original authorizing language included an absolute priority for those 21st CCLC projects that "offer a broad selection of services which address the needs of the community."⁷ Beginning with the program's significant expansion in FY1998, an additional absolute priority was added for: "activities that offer expanded learning

⁴20 U.S.C. 8244.

⁵20 U.S.C. 8245.

⁶The amounts provided by the Second 2000 Conference were reduced from \$453,710,000, per a rescission of FY2000 discretionary budget authority required by the FY2000 appropriations bill (P.L. 106-113).

⁷20 U.S.C. 8244. Only projects that meet these absolute priorities will be funded. In addition, the Secretary has the discretion to include competitive priorities that award additional points to potential grantees' applications.

opportunities for children and youth in the community and that contribute to reduced drug use and violence.”⁸

Funding History

The 21st CCLC received \$750,000 in appropriations in FY1995, its first year of operation. This amount was considerably less than the \$20,000,000 that had been authorized for the program; only six grants were funded in FY1995. In FY1996, continuation funding was provided for these grants through an appropriation of \$750,000 (see **Table 1**).

In its FY1996 budget submission for ED, the Clinton Administration requested no funds for the program in FY1996, and a rescission of the entire \$750,000 for FY1995. Again in its FY1997 budget request, the Clinton Administration requested no funding for the 21st CCLC. It argued that separate funding for this activity was not needed because:

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended, authorizes local education agencies, individual schools, or consortia of schools to use up to 5% of the funds they receive under ESEA to establish and implement coordinated services projects that provide elementary and secondary school students and their families better access to social, health, and education services.⁹

Table 1. 21st Century Learning Centers: Funding History

FY	President’s budget request (in \$)	Appropriation (in \$)
1995	0	750,000
1996	0	750,000
1997	0	1,000,000
1998	50,000,000	40,000,000
1999	200,000,000	200,000,000
2000	600,000,000	453,377,000 ^a
2001	1,000,000,000	845,614,000

^a The amounts provided by the Second 2000 Conference were reduced from \$453,710,000, per a rescission of FY2000 discretionary budget authority required by the FY2000 appropriations bill (P.L. 106-113).

⁸See [<http://www.ed.gov/offices.OERI/21stCCLC/21qa98.html>].

⁹FY1997 Budget Justification, p. U-77.

Beginning in FY1998, the Clinton Administration requested significantly increased funding for the program, and shifted the focus of the program to emphasize extended learning opportunities for children and youth. It argued that the 21st CCLC program could play an important role in addressing the need for after school supervision for children and youth; providing academic help to at-risk students; and, providing a forum for conveying an anti-drug and anti-violence message:

... In 1995, there were 23.5 million school-aged children with parents in the workforce. But as recently as the 1993-1994 school year, 70 percent of all public elementary, middle, and combined schools did not have a before- or after-school program. In rural areas, 82 percent of public schools did not have such programs. In addition, the majority of extended-day programs are aimed at kindergarten and early elementary school students, and focus on supervised care rather than academic instruction. This program would bring much-needed attention to the provision of supplementary learning activities and on activities addressing the needs of adolescents and the problems of drug use, gang involvement, and violence.¹⁰

The Clinton Administration pursued the expansion of the 21st CCLC program with an emphasis on expanded learning opportunities for children with several goals in mind: reducing social promotion by providing additional time for mentoring and after school hours learning; reducing juvenile crime by providing structured learning activities; providing drug counseling to students; and providing a positive environment for children who otherwise would be without adult supervision. These goals derived from a perceived need of families with working parents for after school supervision for their children, and from the belief that children with adult supervision are less likely to use drugs, engage in or be the victim of violence, and, are more likely to do well in school.¹¹

In addition to providing adult supervision after school hours with the goal of reducing high-risk behaviors, the 21st CCLC program strove to provide additional academic help to raise the performance of at-risk students with respect to state and local standards in core academic subjects by making use of already existing school facilities. After school programs, which generally involve fewer children, could utilize resources that might be scarce during the regular school day (e.g., computers), and could provide more one-on-one attention to students.

The FY1998 budget request was for \$50 million to expand the program to support grants for 200 to 300 new 21st CCLC. By FY1999, \$200 million was appropriated for the program. And, \$845.614 million was appropriated for the program for FY2001. This is considerably more than FY2000 funding, but is less than the Clinton Administration's request for \$1 billion for FY2001. Demand for grants has continued to outstrip supply, indicating a strong interest in communities for this program, and for greater funding of the 21st CCLC, according to the Clinton Administration.

¹⁰FY1998 Budget Justification, p. V-88.

¹¹U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Justice. *Safe and Smart: Making After School Hours Work for Kids*. p. 1. [<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart/title.html>].

As the program grew in scope and its focus shifted, the administration of the program shifted within ED. During its first 3 years of funding (FY1995-FY1997) it was administered by the Early Childhood Institute. In FY1998 and FY1999 it was administered by the Office of Reform, Assistance and Dissemination of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Since FY2000, administration of the program has been located in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Competitive Priorities for Grant Applicants

ED ranked applications for grants under the 21st CCLC program using five core criteria worth a maximum of 100 points.¹² In addition, the Secretary of the Department of Education had the discretion to include additional competitive priorities. From FY1998 through FY2001, the Secretary included one or more competitive priorities as part of each year's grant competition (a competitive priority adds five additional points to a potential grantee's application score). FY1998 competitive priorities were granted to projects that: (1) would help students meet or exceed state and local standards in core academic subjects such as reading, math or science; and (2) would target middle school students. Competitive priority (1) was also awarded to projects considered for funding in FY1999, FY2000, and FY2001.

Each year's grant competition also included an additional competitive priority awarded to projects that addressed significant problems in an Empowerment or Enterprise Zone. This competitive priority served as a tie breaker, no additional points were awarded to applications that met this priority.

Reauthorization Issues

During consideration of reauthorization of the 21st CCLC in the 107th Congress, concern was expressed regarding the rapid growth of the program and whether it was meeting the authorizing legislation's stated goals of providing educational, recreational, cultural, health and social services to all community members in rural and inner city communities. Some of the goals encompassed by the program as it was implemented (e.g., reducing drugs and violence, and targeting empowerment and enterprise zones) were not explicitly addressed in the original authorizing legislation and, some argued, might have been beyond its intent.

A second concern was whether the 21st CCLC program was duplicative of existing federal programs and hence might not have been the most efficient use of federal resources. Program areas most often mentioned in this context (authorizing after school programs) included: ESEA Section 14206(b) authority which permits up to 5% of awarded funds to be used for coordinated services projects; ESEA Title IV,

¹²These five criteria and their maximum point values (for a total of 100) were: (1) need for project (30 points); (2) quality of project design (30 points); (3) adequacy of resources (15 points); (4) quality of the management plan (15 points); and, (5) quality of project evaluation (10 points). 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. Application for Grants.

Safe and Drug Free schools, Sections 4114(c)(6) and 4116(b)(8); ESEA Title VII Part A, Bilingual Education Act, Section 7117(1); ESEA Title IX, Part B, Native Hawaiian Education, Section 9210(b)(2); and some Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs that are provided outside of the standard school day or year. In addition, some childcare bills fund similar programs. (See CRS Report RL30944, *Child Care Issues in the 107th Congress*.)

A third concern was whether the federal government served as the best arbiter of funding decisions under the program. Some argued that the 21st CCLC program would have been able to better serve communities in providing the broad scope of activities envisioned in the authorizing legislation if a greater share of control rested with communities themselves, rather than with the federal government, which had narrowed the program's focus by emphasizing extended learning opportunities for children and youth.

A fourth concern was whether a program as large as the 21st CCLC could be fairly handled through a nationwide competitive grant process. Some argued that with funding at \$200 million in FY1999 and \$845.614 million in FY2001, a formula grant structure was needed in order to help ensure equitable distribution of grants. On the other hand, some argued that without increased funding, formula allocation could dilute individual grant size.

A fifth concern was whether there were sufficient safeguards in place to ensure program accountability and sustainability, particularly given the tremendous growth in the program. What were good measures of program success, and to what extent were good measures currently being employed in evaluating 21st CCLC programs? In addition, how would communities find funding to sustain their programs after the 3 years of federal funding was exhausted? The House Committee on Appropriations raised concerns about the program's accountability in its report accompanying the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies FY1999 Appropriation Bill:

The Committee remains concerned that the Department has not identified specific, measurable standards consistent with the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act for the 21st century community learning centers. It is essential for the Department to develop specific measurable standards relating to the core services listed in the authorizing legislation and particularly focusing on academic and social preparation for school. Such data should include baseline data on the academic improvements and transfer of programmatic innovations and specific, measurable changes that are expected to occur as a result of proposed increased funding.¹³

¹³U.S. Congress. House. *Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 1999*. H.Rept. 105-635, 105th Congress, 2d Sess. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1998. p. 199.

ED submitted a FY2000 strategic plan for the 21st CCLC that included standards of performance for 21st CCLC grantees.¹⁴ ED also made available to applicants its Continuous Improvement Management Guide for the 21st CCLC, a resource on how to effectively plan and monitor a 21st CCLC. And, ED contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a 4-year external evaluation of the program. However, because the program is still relatively new, there were not any thorough empirical evaluations of its performance. In addition, the wide variety and scope of program activities funded under the 21st CCLC program made the creation and execution of program-wide standards of performance and evaluation challenging.

Legislation in the 107th Congress

On December 13 and 18, 2001, respectively, the House and Senate adopted the conference version of **H.R. 1**, The No Child Left Behind Act. **H.R. 1/P.L. 107-110** was signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002.

H.R. 1, the No Child Left Behind Act, was passed by the full House on May 23, 2001. This bill would have reauthorized the 21st CCLC as a formula grant program as part of a new Title V — Safe Schools for the 21st Century. One-half of the amount awarded to states would have been allocated in proportion to their school aged population; and one-half would have been awarded in proportion to their share of grants received in the preceding fiscal year under Subpart 2, Part A of the ESEA. States receiving grants would have awarded competitive grants to eligible entities (a local educational agency, community-based organization, and other public entity or private organization or a consortium of two or more of such groups.) The House Committee on Education and the Workforce amended H.R. 1 to retain a separate funding stream (\$900 million in FY2002 and such sums as may be necessary for the succeeding 4 fiscal years) for the 21st CCLC program. Authorized activities would have included before and after school activities to advance student achievement. Sixty million dollars would have been authorized for FY2002 for national programs to evaluate the effectiveness of all Title V programs, including the 21st CCLC program.

The Senate's version of H.R. 1, the Better Education for Students and Teachers (BEST) Act, a bill to reauthorize and revise the ESEA, was passed on June 14, 2001. The BEST Act would have reauthorized the 21st CCLC program as a new Part F of Title I. Under the BEST Act, the list of potential 21st CCLC grantees would have been expanded to include general purpose units of local government (counties, cities, etc.) and community-based organizations, as well as local educational agencies. The BEST Act would have reauthorized the 21st CCLC program as a formula grant to states and as a competitive grant from the states to eligible local grantees. The Act

¹⁴An example is related to program outcomes: “Beginning in 2000, Centers will report that more than 75% of students participating in the program for at least 2 years show improvements on measures such as grades, attendance, taking of advanced or challenging courses such as algebra, honors courses, and AP courses, and decreased disciplinary actions.” See [<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/planrpts.html>]. U.S. Department of Education FY2000 Annual Plan. p. 22.

would have allocated grants to states (after reservations) in proportion to their share of grants received in the preceding fiscal year under Subpart 2, Part A of the ESEA. Like the No Child Left Behind Act, the BEST Act would have focused the 21st CCLC program on before- and after-school activities intended to advance student achievement. In addition, the BEST Act would have authorized the 21st CCLC program to offer families of participating students opportunities for lifelong learning and literacy development. The Act would have authorized \$1.5 billion for the program in FY2002, and such sums as might be necessary for each of the 6 succeeding years.

S. 156 (Boxer), introduced on January 23, 2001, would have reauthorized the 21st CCLC as a separate program, would have extended the maximum grant duration to 5 years, and would have implemented matching requirements. **H.R. 340 (Miller)**, introduced on January 31, 2001, would have reauthorized the 21st CCLC as a separate program and would have changed the program to operate as a formula grant program to states, and then as a competitive grant program from states to LEAs. **H.R. 345/S. 303 (Roemer/Lieberman)**, introduced on January 31, 2001, would have incorporated the 21st CCLC program into a broader Title VI titled: “High Performance and Quality Education Initiatives,” but would have retained a priority within Title VI for “extended learning time” services.

Legislation in the 106th Congress

The Clinton administration’s ESEA reauthorization proposal, *The Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999*, would have changed the 21st CCLC in some significant ways. The proposal would have extended grants for up to 5 years (from the present 3 years); it would have added a local matching requirement for grantees; and it would have allowed up to 10% of grants to be awarded directly to community-based organizations (with the agreement of the school district). In addition, the proposal would have added a provision stating that grants would be awarded on behalf of schools in inner cities, small cities, and rural areas: “that serve communities with a substantial need for expanded learning opportunities because: (A) they have a high proportion of low-achieving students; (B) they lack resources to establish or expand after-school centers that benefit the educational, health, social service, cultural, and recreational needs of the community; or (C) they have other needs consistent with the purposes of this part.” The Clinton Administration argued that these new requirements would strengthen local communities’ ability to operate successful after-school programs, would extend benefits of the program to more individuals, and would increase the likelihood that a program will be continued after the federal grant expires.

The Clinton Administration’s ESEA authorization proposal was introduced in the House as **H.R. 1960 (Clay)** and in the Senate as **S. 1180 (Kennedy)** on May 26, 1999, and May 27, 1999, respectively. These bills contained the same 21st CCLC provisions as those contained in the Administration’s proposal. Although essentially the same in other respects as well, these bills were not identical in every respect to the Administration’s ESEA authorization proposal. For more information on these

differences see: CRS Issue Brief IB98047, *Elementary and Secondary Education: Reconsideration of the Federal Role by the 106th Congress*.

H.R. 4141, the Education Opportunities to Protect and Invest in Our Nation's Students (Education OPTIONS) Act, was ordered to be reported by the House Committee on Education and the Workforce on April 13, 2000. H.R. 4141 would have incorporated the 21st CCLC program along with drug and violence prevention programs into a new title: "Supporting Drug and Violence Prevention and Education for Students and Communities Act of 2000." H.R. 4141 would have replaced the existing competitive 21st CCLC grant program with a program awarded principally on a formula grant basis. Four of the 13 activities authorized by the original 21st CCLC legislation (P.L. 103-382) would have been eliminated. The eliminated activities would have been: integrated health and social service programs; nutrition and health programs; support and training for child day care providers; and, employment counseling, training, and placement. Many new activities, not included in the original 21st CCLC program, related to the prevention of drug use and violence, would have been added. H.R. 4141 would have permitted Title II funds to be transferred to other activities authorized by the legislation.

S. 2, the Educational Opportunities Act, was reported by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on April 12, 2000. This legislation would have reauthorized the 21st CCLC program without significant changes.