



December 2008

TO: The Obama Administration Transition Team

**FR: Jennifer Peck, Executive Director
Bay Area Partnership for Children and Youth**

RE: Recommendations for Strengthening the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and Related No Child Left Behind Programs

Thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations on how to improve the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program and related programs in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to ensure that the children, families and communities in the Bay Area and across California have access to the support services they need to thrive and succeed.

The Bay Area Partnership works to expand access to quality after school, nutrition and health programs in the most disadvantaged communities in the Bay Area. We have successfully advocated at the state level to increase flexibility and funding for after school programs, and helped enact the sweeping reforms of 2006 that took the state's after school support to a whole new level by dramatically strengthening Proposition 49.

Through our work, we have gained deep policy and programmatic knowledge that provides the context and rationale for our recommendations for strengthening after school provisions in NCLB. In order to ensure that the recommendations are grounded in the best practices of afterschool providers, we conducted a series of interviews with different after school providers representing urban, rural, suburban communities and representing programs managed by districts or schools as well as community-based organizations in our nine-county area. The interviewees focused on similar priorities and challenges, reflected in the recommendations below.

We hope you will consider these recommendations as you develop your proposals for the NCLB reauthorization. I look forward to discussing the recommendations with you further.



STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR HIGH-QUALITY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO A SAFE AND ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

From our experience, and from the research base in both California, and across the country, there are several key points why federal policymakers should act now.

After School Programs Make a Difference

Many after school programs are working. Parents, communities and researchers agree.

- The public supports after school programs that **keep children safe, support working families, help children complete homework and enhance learning** through a wide variety of activities and experiences—*not* programs that just extend the regular school day.
- After school programs **offer a critical set of supports and opportunities for children's healthy development and academic success**, including:
 - improved attendance, homework completion and academic achievement;
 - a physically and emotionally safe environment;
 - caring relationships with adults and peers who can provide guidance and support;
 - responsible decision-making and leadership; and
 - increased understanding of, and positive involvement in, their own communities.

Communities face challenges in fully implementing the 21st CCLC

Although the 21st CCLC has been successful in many communities, other communities still do not have access to these programs or face barriers to fully realizing the potential of after school programs.

- **The intent of the 21st CCLC program is to provide expanded enrichment opportunities to children attending low performing schools.** The law technically encourages offering both academic supports to meet state standards and a broad array of other services and programs, such as art, music, recreation activities, character education, career and technical training, drug and violence prevention and technology education. Offering educational services for families of participating students, such as literacy instruction, computer training and/or cultural enrichment is allowable. **In practice, programs are pushed to over-emphasize the need for academic outcomes at the expense of other developmental outcomes for children.**



- 21st CCLC funding allows programming to take place before school, after school, during intersessions and/or during holidays or summer recess. **With the emphasis on the after school hours, summer programming has not received the necessary attention or supports.**
 - **State applications are too complex and burdensome for smaller schools, smaller districts and community-based organizations (CBOs) to apply for the program.** In CA, only a small number of CBOs have 21st CCLC grants. Without staff capacity or budget resources to write complicated, large grants these players are cut out of the picture. If we are to ensure that the neediest children and families have access to high-quality after school programs, **we must make sure that 21st CCLC funding is accessible to ALL eligible providers.**
 - **Sustainability is a key issue.** Originally intended as seed money, the 21st CCLC program is at serious risk in many communities as grants end. Programs report needing **flexibility in the length of grant periods** to allow time for developing capacity and cultivating funding sources, and **programs need training and models of sustainability.**
 - **After school programs should be held accountable for success—but there is not consensus about what to measure and how to measure program success.** How after school programs are measured – by which most appropriate outcomes and what tools to use to measure them – is critical to the success of the programs, but needs further research and national leadership.
 - **Intentional coordination and alignment between 21st CCLC and Supplemental Education Services programs would better serve the most needy students.** The SES program’s singular focus on academic tutoring could be offered within the existing structures of 21st CCLC and after school programs without the unnecessary restrictions that create boundaries for students. Creating simplified means for after school providers to become SES providers would benefit students.
 - **The rules are too stringent to allow programs to meet the needs of different communities and different children.** Over time, the U.S. Department and the states have decreased flexibility in operating 21st CCLC programs. Too often, programs are not able to create comprehensive programs that will meet the specific needs of their community. For example, in California, programs can no longer serve family members if they do not already attend school at that site. In certain communities, this policy drives families away who cannot manage the logistics of having different children in different after school programs.
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PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Refocus the 21st CCLC Program on Enriching and Enhancing Learning and Meeting Community Needs

Strengthen community learning centers to support their most comprehensive and effective use

- Purpose. Delete Sec 4201(a)(1) ~~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 academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics;~~

And insert a new Sec. 4201(a)(1) “.”

“Provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including through alternative methods of teaching and learning, that utilize a broad range of services and activities that promote healthy development, and help students stay in school, engage in learning and meet State and local student academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics.”

In Section 4201(a)(1), insert a new (4), (5), (6) and (7) as follows:

(4) Support a variety of approaches to out-of-school learning that incorporates community needs including, but not limited to, afterschool programs, summer programs, year-round programs, extended day programs and before-school programs;

(5) Hold states, schools and community-based organizations accountable for effectiveness through appropriate, measurable outcomes;

(6) Ensure that a wide variety of district and community-based organizations are able to access 21st CCLC funding and use it to create quality youth programming; and

(7) Ensure deliberate coordination of other education funding streams with out-of-school programs to maximize efficiencies, cost-effectiveness and continuity of learning for children.

- Definitions. In Sec 4201(b)(1)(A) after “assists students in” add “staying in school, engaging in learning and”
- Local Activities. In Sec. 4205(a) after “...recess periods) that” add “enrich, enhance and”
- Add to Committee Report Language: The Committee believes that the core purpose of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is to promote student success by supporting academic achievement and student health and well-being. In implementing this program, the Committee wants to make clear to states and grantees that the Community Learning Center program should not



replicate but rather enhance the regular school day, by offering a range of activities that capture student interest. The Committee believes that all Community Learning Centers should employ a variety of approaches to learning that are developmentally appropriate, designed based on student and community needs, and can attract consistent student participation.

Reinforce that the community needs are a priority by adding to the purpose of the program that community learning centers should meet the needs of their communities

- Purpose. Sec. 4201(a)(2) delete “and” at the end of the paragraph, and “and” after paragraph (3) and add a new paragraph (4): “meet the specific needs of the communities that the community learning center serves.”

Expand Access to Programs for All Eligible Grantees

Streamline and simplify the application process to ensure all eligible grantees can apply

- State Application. In Sec.4203(a) add a new (15): “(15) provides an assurance that the State will develop an application and related processes that ensure program quality and effectiveness while limiting the length of the application and reducing unnecessary burden on eligible grantees to ensure all eligible grantees who are interested can apply, including focusing the information required in the application on strategies and goals that will be useful to grantees as they implement the program.”
- State Application. In Sec. 4203(a) add a new (16): “(16) states shall provide an assurance that they will provide opportunities for potential grantees, online and in person, to access technical assistance on how to write effective grant proposals, giving priority for technical assistance to small, rural applicants.”

Provide technical assistance to CBOs, small schools and small, rural districts that do not have large staff and the capacity to hire grant writers

- State Application. In Sec. 4203(a)(2) after “State-level activities;” add “for technical assistance to the most disadvantaged communities, small community-based organizations, and small or rural districts that do not have the capacity to access the funds independently, and other purposes;”

Increase Flexibility to Meet Communities’ Needs

Allow programs to serve the siblings of students being served under the program, even if they do not attend that school during the school day

- State Application. In Sec. 4203(a) add a new (16): “(16) provides an assurance that programs will be allowed to serve children who do not attend the school but are siblings of students who attend the school and participate in the 21st CCLC program and other children in the community for which the location and activities of the 21st CCLC program are beneficial.”

Allow nutrition education as a core activity

- Purpose. In Sec. 4201(a)(2) add “nutrition education” after “and recreation programs”
- Definitions. In Sec. 4201(b)(1) after “recreation” add “nutrition education”



- Local Activities. In Sec. 4205(a) add a new (13), “(13) nutrition education programs.”

Allow communities to run year-round programs to help keep children engaged, safe and off the streets

- State Application. In Sec. 4203(a) add a new (17): “(17) provides an assurance that local grantees will be allowed to use any funds under this part to operate programs during any non-school-day hours, whether it be before- or after-school programs or programs in the summer, without limitation by the State.”
- State Application. In Section 4203(a) add new (18): “(18) provides an assurance that the State will hold one grant competition for all programs whether the programs include afterschool, before school, summer or year-round programs.”
- Local Activities. In Sec. 4205(a) add a new (14), “(14) summer and year-long programs.”

Better ensure programs are high-quality

Allow state and local funds to be used for training and professional development of after school staff to ensure that children are receiving high quality learning and enrichment activities.

- State Application. In Sec. 4203(a)(6) after “training” add “professional development for after school staff.”
- Local Application. In Sec. 4204(b) create a new (N) and redesignate the rest, “(N) a description of the ongoing professional development that the after school staff will receive to ensure that they are providing a structured, intentional learning environment that promotes healthy development and school success for all children.”

Increase Accountability System Aligned to Measurable Program Goals

Create a national panel to recommend outcomes and how to measure them that will accurately demonstrate the effectiveness of after school programs



- Add: (a) National Academy of Sciences Study – Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of [insert short title of reauthorization], the Secretary shall enter into a contract with the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a study focused on expanding the definition of what constitutes student success and identifying strategies for helping students acquire such skills. The study shall do each of the following:
 - (1) Review and synthesize the research that identifies work-ready skills (such as critical and creative thinking, team work, information usages, and communication) and skills needed for civic participation and engagement that can be acquired by school-aged children and have been shown to be related to success in adult life.
 - (2) Review what is known about the teaching and learning of the work-ready skills and civic skills identified under paragraph (1) for school-aged children, both inside and outside of traditional school settings.
 - (3) Identify strategies to strengthen the acquisition of those work-ready and civic skills both inside and outside of traditional school settings, including the development of standards, curricula, measures, and assessments of these skills.
- (b) Members of the Panel—The members of the panel responsible for conducting the study required by subsection (a) shall consist of an appropriate number of experts from the in-school and out-of-school fields, such as—
 - (1) experts in children and adolescent development;
 - (2) experts in education, including experts in out-of-school and in-school learning and in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade education.
 - (3) experts in academic and non-academic assessments, including experts in innovative assessments;
 - (4) representatives from the business community;
 - (5) experts knowledgeable about skills necessary for civic participation.
- (c) Report.—Not later than 24 months after the contract described in subsection (a) has been finalized, the panel described in subsection (b) shall issue a report that includes conclusions and recommendation for policy and practice regarding paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (a).

Align 21st CCLC principles of effectiveness to the standards and measurements outlined by the National Panel on Measuring After School Effectiveness”

- Local Activities. Sec. 4205(b) add a new (3): “(3) Alignment with the Findings of the National Panel on Measuring After School Effectiveness—Upon completion of report by the National Panel on Measuring After School Effectiveness, all activities outlined in Sec.4205(b)(A) and (B) shall be aligned to the performance standards and performance measures recommended by the Panel.”
- State Applications. Sec. 4203(a)(13) add a new (C): “and (C) how the State will align its performance indicators and performance measures to the recommendations of the National Panel on Measuring After School Effectiveness.”

**Encourage and Foster Sustainability**

Support continued operation of quality after school programs by allowing grant renewal for programs that demonstrate grant compliance and program effectiveness.

- Award Duration—Section 4204(g) is amended by striking the period and inserting “, and are renewable for a period of not less than 3 years and not more than 5 years based on grant performance.”

Increase flexibility in the Supplemental Education Services Programs to Allow for Better Coordination with After School Programs and Increase Impact on Achievement

Maintain the SES focus on academics and improving student achievement on state standards, but encourage coordination with enrichment programs to ensure cost-effective and educationally sound coordination with other after school programs

- Supplemental Education Services/LEA Agreement. In Sec. 1116(e)(3) add a new (F): “(F) describe how the program will be coordinated with other after school programs including the 21st CCLC program.”
- Supplemental Education Services/Priority. In Sec. 1116(e) add a new (6): “(6) the State educational agency shall give priority to applicants to be providers that combine tutoring with other services that enhance learning.”
- Supplemental Education Services/LEA Responsibility. In 1116(2)(A) add a new (iv), “(iv) a brief description of the services other than tutoring that are provided to enhance learning.”
- Supplemental Education Services/SEA Responsibility. In Sec. 1116(e)(4) add a new “(F): “(F) develop and implement a plan to allow and encourage local programs funded under this section to be coordinated with other after school programs including the 21st CCLC program to ensure the most cost-effective and enriching programs.”
- Supplemental Education Services/Criteria for Providers. In Sec. 1116(e)(5) add a new (E): “(E) Ensure that the program will be coordinated with other after school programs to ensure the most cost-effective programs and most academically enriching programs are provided to students.”

**Improve Quality of After School Staff**

Allow funds under Title II of NCLB to be used for high-quality, ongoing professional development for after school staff to ensure that children are receiving structured, intentional learning experiences after school that are designed to enhance and enrich classroom learning

- State Use of Funds. In Sec. 2113(c) add a new (19): “(19) Providing ongoing, high-quality professional development to after school staff to ensure that they are providing structured, intentional learning environments that enhance and enrich classroom learning for all children.”

Increase Coordination of In-School and Out-of-School Activities to Ensure that the Learning Experiences of Children Are Aligned

Require Title I programs to coordinate their curriculum and activities with after school programs to ensure that the after school enrichment programs support and enhance classroom learning

- State Application. In Sec.1112(b) insert a new (Q) and redesignate all that follows: “(Q) a description of the strategies and actions the local educational agency will take to coordinate the curriculum, professional development and activities under this section with the curriculum, professional development and activities in all Federal, State or locally funded after school programs.”
- Schoolwide Programs. In Sec.1114(b) insert a new (K): “(K) Coordination of the school day curriculum, professional development and activities with the after school program curriculum, professional development and activities.
- Targeted Assistance Schools. In Sec.1115(c) insert a new (I): “(I) Coordination of the school day curriculum, professional development and activities with the after school program curriculum, professional development and activities.
- School Improvement, School Plan. In Sec.1116(b)(A)(3) insert a new (xi): “(xi) Coordination of the school day curriculum, professional development and activities with the after school program curriculum, professional development and activities.
- Parental Involvement, Local Educational Agency Policy. In Sec.1118(a)(2) insert a new (G): “(G) demonstrate how after school programs will be used as one of the strategies for engaging and involving parents.”