CHCI POLICY BRIEF
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Beyond the Classroom: Expanding Community Partnerships for Whole-Student Success

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Executive Summary

Federal education policy has long emphasized standardized testing and academic benchmarks as the primary measures of success, often overlooking the social, cultural, physical, and economic conditions that shape student learning. For Latino students in Title I high schools, this narrow approach fails to address systemic barriers such as limited access to enrichment opportunities, language support, and family engagement resources that impede achievement. These gaps underscore the need for policy frameworks that recognize education as a community effort rather than a classroom constraint. Community partnerships offer a proven strategy by integrating academic, health, and social supports that improve attendance, engagement, and educational outcomes, yet current federal accountability and funding frameworks limit their expansion at the high school level.

Key Terms

- *Title I Schools*: Public schools receiving supplemental federal funding under Title I, Part A of ESEA to support students from low-income families. [1]
- *Whole Student Success*: An educational approach that improves academic outcomes by addressing students' academic, social, emotional, and physical needs.[2]
- *Community Schools*: Collaborative arrangements between schools, families, and community organizations that integrate academic instruction with social and enrichment support.[3]
- *Full Service Community School (FSCS) and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)*: The FSCS program provides grants for schools to coordinate academic, social, and health services with community organizations.[4] The 21st CCLC program funds after-school and summer learning programs that offer educational enrichment and youth development opportunities.[5]

Background

Latino learners are the fastest-growing population in U.S. public schools, representing nearly 27% of students enrolled in PreK-12 programs.[6] Historically, these students have been disproportionately concentrated in Title I schools, with 37.5% of Latino students participating in Title I public schools, reflecting broader patterns of economic disadvantage.[7] Despite increasing enrollment, they continue to experience lower academic outcomes compared with non-Latino peers, including higher rates of absenteeism, disengagement, and dropout.[8]

Schools serving high concentrations of Latino students frequently face structural and institutional barriers that limit their capacity to support student success.[9] Shortages of bilingual and culturally competent staff constrain instruction and engagement, while limited access to mentorship, advanced coursework, and college-preparatory opportunities reduces exposure to pathways that foster persistence and postsecondary attainment.[10] Adolescence introduces additional challenges for Latino students, as identity development, peer influence, school climate, and

sense of belonging powerfully shape engagement.[11] Students may also face unmet mental health needs, immigration-related stress, racial identity struggles, and limited guidance, which can further hinder learning and emotional well-being.[12]

Evidence shows that culturally responsive teaching, bilingual support, mentorship, and family engagement initiatives improve attendance, academic outcomes, and social-emotional well-being.[13] Supporting Latino student success requires policy reforms that expand federal investment in whole-student initiatives to address existing funding and policy gaps effectively.

Problem Analysis

Federal Policy and Funding Constraints on Title I Schools

Federal education policy has sought to promote equity primarily through accountability systems tied to standardized test performance, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment.[14] While valuable for monitoring academic outcomes, these measures fail to capture critical factors, such as mental health support, mentorship, family engagement, and culturally responsive instruction, that enable students, particularly Latino learners, to thrive.

Title I is intended to provide targeted resources to schools serving high concentrations of students from low-income families.[15] In practice, however, compliance-driven requirements limit schools' flexibility to invest in family engagement, mental health services, mentorship, and community partnerships.[16] Although these supports are strongly associated with graduation and postsecondary success, they are rarely reflected in Title I accountability metrics, discouraging sustained investment at the high school level.[17] These challenges are amplified by limited family engagement capacity, weak community partnerships, and funding patterns that prioritize elementary and middle schools.[18]

Latino High School Learners and the Case for Whole-Student Support

High school marks a pivotal stage of adolescence for Latino learners, as the transition to more rigorous coursework coincides with increased independence and critical decisions about postsecondary pathways. During these years, identity formation, social belonging, and cognitive development intersect with linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers, influencing engagement and persistence.[19] Latino students disproportionately experience limited access to advanced coursework, inadequate mental health supports, and insufficient culturally responsive instruction, increasing vulnerability to disengagement and dropout without targeted intervention.[20]

Academic outcomes highlight the need for whole-student support. On the 2024 eighth-grade NAEP, Latino students scored an average of 208 in reading, 36 points below proficiency and six points lower than in 2022, and 41 points below proficiency in math. [21] These early academic gaps widen as students enter high school, affecting course placement, credit accumulation, and graduation outcomes. While overall high school dropout rates have declined, Hispanic students still face a 7.9 percent rate, nearly double that of white students at 4.3 percent.[22] These disparities reflect not only academic barriers but also unmet social-emotional needs: many Latino adolescents report elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and disconnection from school, yet they are the least likely among adolescents to access mental health services.[23]

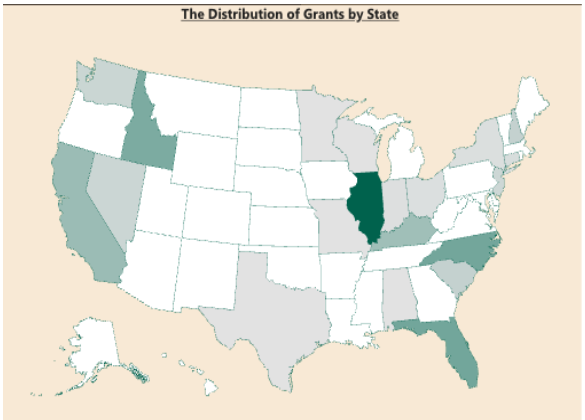
Evidence indicates that programs providing mentorship, leadership development, and culturally relevant engagement opportunities strengthen school attachment, reduce dropout risk, and support long-term academic persistence.[24] Collectively, these findings highlight the need for policy frameworks that move beyond narrow academic metrics and support integrated, whole-student strategies tailored to the developmental and contextual needs of Latino high school students.[25]

Funding Gaps in Federal Whole-Student Initiatives

Federal funding for whole student strategies remains fragmented, inconsistent, and often treated as supplemental rather than central to Title I objectives.

- *21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)*: Supports over 10,000 learning centers serving approximately 1.4 million students annually.[26] Current funding, roughly $1.3 billion per year, does not reach all eligible schools.[27] In 2024, only one in three funding requests was awarded, reflecting high competition and insufficient resources.[28] The evaluation shows that nearly half of the participants demonstrate academic gains and reductions in chronic absenteeism.[29] Despite these positive outcomes, constrained funding limits the program's reach and sustainability, particularly in secondary schools.
- *Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS):* Received approximately $79 million in federal funding for FY 2023 to support comprehensive implementation efforts.[30] However, this funding reached only 30 grantees in FY 2023, down from 42 in FY 2022.[31] While FSCS represents the federal government's most explicit investment in the community school model, it operates at a limited scale and relies on competitive, time-limited grants.[32] These constraints limit districts' ability to plan long-term, institutionalize partnerships, and sustain coordinated supports, especially at the high school level.[33]

Figure 1. Full-Service Community School Grant Distribution in 2023 [34]



Both programs prioritize students in high-poverty Title I schools, yet access varies across states and districts.[35] The separation of FSCS and 21st CCLC across funding streams, combined with competitive grant structures and limited alignment with Title I accountability systems, further reduces their effectiveness as systemic supports. These limitations are consequential for Latino-majority Title I high schools, where sustained, school-wide investments are necessary to address persistent inequities in engagement, attainment, and postsecondary readiness.

Evidence from 21st CCLC and Community Schools

In 2024, Communities In Schools (CIS), the nation's largest evidence-based student support organization, served more than 2 million students nationwide.[36] Approximately 10 percent of these students received intensive, individualized case management support, and nearly half of those students identified as Hispanic/Latino.[37] Latino students are disproportionately represented among those receiving high-intensity services.[38] CIS operates through a nationally aligned yet locally implemented model that tracks a wide range of school-based strategies, including mental health services, attendance interventions, and family engagement.[39] This breadth of data provides policymakers with one of the few nationally consistent sources for evaluating student outcomes, particularly for Latino students, even as most federal program reporting remains fragmented and primarily state-based.[40]

Overview of Students Served: Key Data from CIS (2024)

The following data provides a snapshot of the students CIS serves and the needs they bring to schools and programs.[41] This national student profile establishes the baseline for understanding which populations are prioritized by integrated support strategies, including those advanced through Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). Later sections will examine how community

schools and 21st CCLC are designed to address these needs and the outcomes that result, particularly in high-need, Title I high schools.

Total case-managed students: 201,270

- Hispanic/Latino students: 46% (largest share)
- Black students: 30%
- White students: 19%

High-Need Indicators

- 85% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) eligibility
- 25% are English Learners, with Spanish and Arabic as the most commonly spoken languages.
- 16% receive special education services
- 87.9% of schools participating in CIS are Title I eligible

Table 1. Known Attributes of Case-Managed Students[42]

Student Characteristic	Number of Students
English Language Learner	42,472
Experienced / Exposed to Trauma	37,294
Special Education	25,613
Homeless	9,428
Incarcerated Parent	7,497
Over Age / Under Credit	4,505
Substance Abuse	3,242
Adjudicated Youth	3,083
Child of Active Duty Military	2,664
Foster Care / Group Home	2,363
Pregnant / Parenting	1,038
Gang Involvement	952

Known Attributes of Case-Managed Students

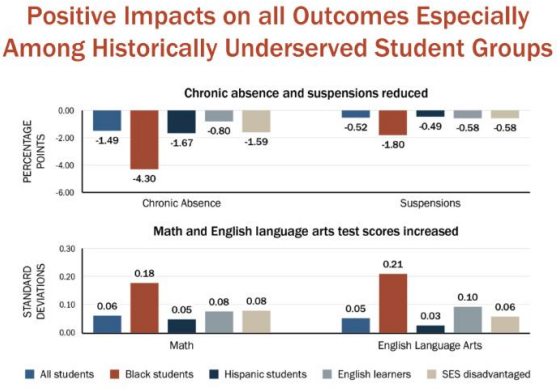
CIS students face complex challenges beyond academics, including high rates of poverty, linguistic diversity, and significant special education needs. Latino students make up the largest share of those receiving intensive services, reflecting both demographic trends and concentrated barriers in high-poverty schools. From a policy perspective, it is important to examine how federal initiatives like Full-Service Community Schools and 21st Century Community Learning Centers address these challenges. While nationally consistent outcome data are limited, state-level evaluations show academic, behavioral, and social-emotional benefits for high-need students.

Community Schools: Evidence from the States

Several states have invested in large-scale community school initiatives to support students in high-poverty schools by integrating academic instruction with health services, family engagement, and community partnerships. While most state evaluations report schoolwide outcomes rather than disaggregated results by student subgroup or school type, the evidence consistently shows improvements across participating schools.

California's Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) offers the most robust body of evidence and includes limited subgroup data. State evaluations document reductions in chronic absenteeism and suspension rates, alongside gains in mathematics and English language arts achievement. These improvements are particularly pronounced among Latino students, English learners, and students from low-income households, while positive effects are also observed across the broader student population.

Figure 2. Impacts of Community School Strategies by Student Group[43]



Other states, including New York, Kentucky, and New Mexico, report similar patterns of schoolwide improvement following the adoption of community school models. Evaluations from these states highlight increased attendance, higher graduation rates, reduced disciplinary incidents, stronger family–school partnerships, and expanded access to mental and behavioral health services. Although these studies do not consistently isolate outcomes for Latino students or Title I high schools, the convergence of findings across diverse contexts underscores the value of comprehensive, whole-student support in high-poverty settings.

The table below summarizes key state-level community school initiatives, the student populations they serve, and the general outcomes reported across participating schools.

Table 2. State Community School Initiatives and Reported Outcomes[44]

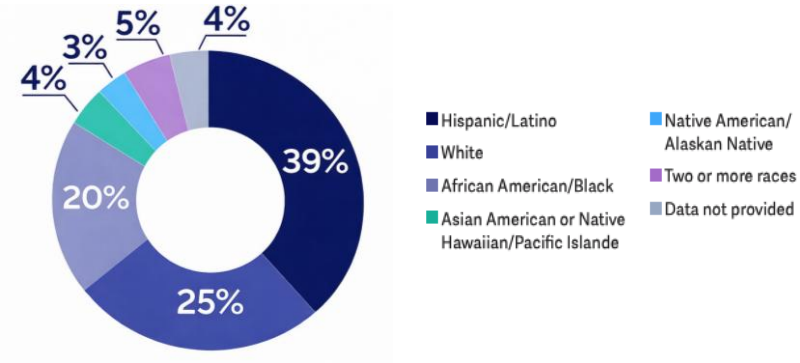
State	Program Name	Student Population Focus	Key Reported Outcomes
CA	California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP)	High-poverty, multilingual, large Latino enrollment (76.9%)	Chronic absence rates reduced by 30% more in CCSPP schools than in similar non-CCSPP schools; suspensions declined by 15%; math gains of 0.06 standard deviation (≈43 additional days of learning); ELA gains of 0.05 standard deviation (≈36 additional days).[45]
NY	New York City Community Schools Initiative	Urban, high-poverty, diverse, including large Hispanic enrollment	Graduation rates in community schools were up to 7.2 percentage points higher than in comparison schools; high school chronic absenteeism was 8.3 points lower, with Hispanic and English language learners earning an average of 1.4 more credits per year than peers in comparison schools.[46]
NM	Penasco Independent School District Community Schools	High-poverty, Latino (86% Hispanic), rural	Family and community event attendance increased substantially; chronic absenteeism dropped from 45% to 32%; high school graduation rate exceeded 90% in 2022–23, compared to 76% statewide.[47]
KY	Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSC)	High-poverty, rural and urban	Community-based organization participation increased by 46%; reading achievement rose by nearly 10%; math achievement increased by just over 10% within the first 18 months of implementation.[48]

Community school initiatives have improved achievement and attendance, particularly in elementary schools. At the secondary level, however, impacts are more limited.[49] Gains are strongest in schools that reduce chronic absenteeism.[50] Traditional high school structures, such as departmentalized schedules and fewer opportunities for close student-staff-family relationships, can hinder the implementation of core community school practices.[51] These findings highlight the need for targeted support and structural changes to strengthen community schools in high schools.

21st CCLC: Evidence from the States

Across states, 21st CCLC evaluations consistently associate regular program participation with improvements in attendance, academic engagement, and academic performance, particularly in mathematics and literacy. Outcomes are strongest for students who attend frequently and over sustained periods. Given that Latino students comprise the largest share of participants, these school-related gains have direct implications for efforts to narrow opportunity gaps in Title I schools.

Figure 3. 21st CCLC Participation by Student Group [52]



State-level evaluations reinforce these national patterns. As summarized in Table 3, states report improvements in reading and mathematics achievement, school-day attendance, classroom behavior, and homework completion across diverse contexts. Stronger effects are often observed among English learners and other high-need student populations, suggesting that 21st CCLC provides meaningful academic and engagement benefits in high-poverty settings.

Table 3. State 21st CCLC Evaluations and Reported Outcomes[53]

State	Grades	Key Reported Outcomes
DE	9-12	83% of 9th–12th grade participants reported feeling more connected to school as a result of the program.[54]
KY	Middle & High School	82% reported increased school involvement, 74% reported enjoying school more, and 82% reported improved behavior.[55]
OK	N/A	92% improvement in math scores and 87% in reading/language arts; students attending >270 hours showed the largest gains.[56]
IL	7-8 & 10-12	71% of students with a prior GPA below 3.0 improved their GPA during the 2022–23 school year.[57]
TX	HS	Participants showed gains in GPA and credits earned; high school students attending ≥60 days were 97% more likely to be promoted than nonparticipants.[58]

These findings support the conclusion that 21st CCLC provides measurable benefits in attendance and academic outcomes, but federal policy and funding constraints limit the program's reach and sustainability, particularly for high school students in Title I schools.

Recommended Actions

Increase and Stabilize Federal Funding for 21st CCLC and FSCS.

Congress should increase annual appropriations for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Full Service Community Schools programs and extend grant periods to support multi-year implementation. More stable funding would reduce staffing turnover, strengthen long-term partnerships, and allow districts, particularly Title I high schools, to scale effective practices rather than operate under short-term, competitive grant cycles.

To address fragmented federal reporting and limited visibility into secondary outcomes, Congress should require grantees to report consistent, high school-level data, disaggregated by grade span and student subgroup, to strengthen evaluation and inform future funding decisions.

Establish a High School Set-Aside or Incentive within 21st CCLC and FSCS

Congress should establish a targeted funding stream within the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Full Service Community Schools programs to support high school implementation, where participation and outcomes have been less consistent than in earlier grades. Priority should be given to programs that support credit recovery, mentoring, career exploration, and structured afterschool or summer learning aligned with high school schedules and graduation requirements.

As part of this targeted investment, Congress should require standardized reporting on high school-specific indicators such as attendance, credit accumulation, and graduation-related outcomes. Clearer reporting expectations would yield stronger evidence of what works at the secondary level and improve accountability for federally funded whole-student initiatives.

Conclusion

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) programs represent key federal investments in whole-student supports for high-poverty and historically underserved communities. National and state evaluations consistently link these models to improved attendance, increased engagement, and stronger academic outcomes, particularly at the elementary level. These programs serve large shares of Latino students, English learners, and students from low-income families, helping narrow opportunity gaps and advance equity in Title I schools.

Despite these positive trends, results for high school students are less consistent, highlighting the need for further research, targeted investment, and program adaptation to address adolescents' specific needs. Continued federal and state support for 21st CCLC and FSCS is essential to expanding access, enhancing program quality, and ensuring that all students receive the comprehensive supports necessary for academic and lifelong success.

Endnotes

[1]Originally enacted in 1965 and reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, to improve the academic achievement of students from low-income families. Title I aims to close educational gaps by providing additional financial assistance to schools serving large concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. For more information, see National Center for Education Statistics, "Fast Facts: Title I," U.S. Department of Education, last modified 2024, https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=158.

[2]This framework draws from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as foundational tenets for educators to provide students with a strong, supportive learning environment. It recognizes that student achievement improves when basic needs, mental health, and a sense of belonging are addressed alongside academic instruction, and encompasses both short- and long-term outcomes, including attendance, academic proficiency, health, safety, family engagement, and readiness for college, careers, and civic participation. For more information, see National Education Association, "Whole Student Education," NEA, 2025, https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/whole-student-education#:~:text=Meeting%20the%20needs%20of%20every,and%20a%20clean%20school%20environment.

[3]What makes community schools unique is their integration of four key pillars that together foster conditions for students to thrive: (1) integrated student support; (2) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; (3) active family and community engagement; and (4) collaborative leadership and practices. Community schools serve as hubs that provide academic, health, social, and youth development services to students, families, and the broader community—often remaining open beyond regular school hours to support overall well-being and success. By offering wraparound services such as healthcare, meals, and expanded learning opportunities, these schools address barriers to learning and transform into centers of community engagement, emphasizing shared decision-making and holistic support. For more information, see Partnership for the Future of Learning, "Community Schools Playbook: Chapter 1 – An Introduction to Community Schools," Community Schools Playbook, August 6, 2018, https://communityschools.futureforlearning.org/chapter-1.

[4]The Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) program under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) supports partnerships that integrate academic, health, and social services into the school day to address barriers to learning through a whole-school approach. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, also authorized under ESSA, funds academic enrichment and youth development activities offered before school, after school, and during summer and other non-school hours. While both programs leverage community partnerships to support students in high-poverty schools, FSCS focuses on coordinated, school-wide support embedded in the school environment, whereas 21st CCLC primarily supports supplemental out-of-school-time programming. For more information, see 21st Century Community Learning Centers National Technical Assistance Center, "Full-Service Community Schools: Fact Sheet," February 5, 2025, https://21stcclcntac.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/21stcclcntac_fscs_fact_sheet_rev_2-5-25.pdf.

[5] Ibid.

[6] UnidosUS, "Education," https://unidosus.org/issues/education/#:~:text=The%20Latino%20student%20population%20is,community%20members%20regardless%20of%20race.&text=To%20ensure%20all%20students%20in,for%20social%20and%20economic%20mobility.

[7]National Center for Education Statistics, "Number of students participating in Title I programs, by selected student characteristics and state or jurisdiction: School year 2020-21," Digest of Education Statistics, 2022, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_204.04.asp.

[8]National Center for Education Statistics, "Dropout Rates," Institute of Education Sciences, May 2024, https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16.

[9] Valenzuela, Angela, Emmanuel Garcia, Harriett Romo, and Beatrix Perez. "Institutional and Structural Barriers to Latino/a Achievement." Journal of the Association of Mexican American Educators, November 30, 2011. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ995448

[10] Arbelo-Marrero, Floralba. "Barriers to School Success for Latino Students." Journal of Education and Learning, March 22, 2016. https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/jel/article/view/57053.

[11]Students at this age need to feel cared for effectively at their school and to feel a sense of belonging within the school community. During the era of exclusively test-based accountability under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, U.S. schools often neglected teaching broader life skills and fostering students' sense of self, both of which are necessary for reaching their full potential. According to a 2006 study, 30 percent of high school students engaged in mul.tiple high-risk behaviors, including substance use, sexual activity, violence, and attempted suicide. For more information, see Learning Policy Institute, Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success, September 2018, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Educating_Whole_Child_REPORT.pdf.

[12]A report by California high school students and supported by broader research highlights how unmet mental health needs and cultural disconnection can create significant barriers to academic engagement and persistence. These students describe stressors outside the classroom, including family responsibilities, immigration concerns, and identity pressures that directly affect learning and social-emotional well-being. Addressing these challenges through culturally responsive, whole-student strategies is essential to promoting equity, engagement, and long-term educational success. For more information, see Mia Molina and Celena Contreras, "Beyond the Students: Struggling to Connect with Their Culture," Scot Scoop News, March 22, 2023, https://scotscoop.com/beyond-the-students-struggling-to-connect-with-their-culture/.

[13] Arbelo-Marrero, Floralba. "Barriers to School Success for Latino Students." Journal of Education and Learning, March 22, 2016. https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/jel/article/view/57053.

[14]The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, which expanded federal oversight by mandating standardized testing and requiring states to report student performance by race, disability, English proficiency, and income level. While intended to close achievement gaps, NCLB presented challenges, including teaching to the test, curriculum narrowing, and uneven accountability. In 2015, NCLB was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which returned significant authority to states over academic standards, testing, and resource allocation. While ESSA gives states flexibility over standards, testing, and accountability, reduced federal oversight can worsen inequities. High-need schools, such as those serving large Latino populations, may receive less support, face weaker accountability, and struggle to hire quality teachers, leaving achievement gaps unaddressed. For more information, see Alexandra Walsh, Mary Moynihan, and Elizabeth Yin, "Has the 'Every Student Succeeds Act' Left Children Behind?" The Regulatory Review, August 6, 2022, https://www.theregreview.org/2022/08/06/saturday-seminar-has-the-every-student-succeeds-act-left-children-behind/.

[15]National Center for Education Statistics, "Fast Facts: Title I," U.S. Department of Education, last modified 2024, https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=158.

[16]Title I funds are largely dedicated to staffing needs, with personnel costs accounting for more than 75 percent of total spending in many high-poverty schools. As a result, remaining resources are typically prioritized for family engagement requirements, instructional materials, and professional development, leaving limited flexibility for other types of students supports. For more information, see Kerstin Carlson Le Floch et al., "Study of Title I Schoolwide and Targeted Assistance Programs: Final Report -- April 2018 (PDF)," American Institutes for Research, 2018, https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Study%20of%20Title%20I%20Schoolwide%20and%20Targeted%20Assistance%20Programs_Final%20Report.pdf.

[17]Under current law (ESSA), Title I funds are distributed to school districts through four separate grant formulas: the Basic Grant, Concentration Grant, Targeted Grant, and Education Finance Incentive Grant (EFIG). Each has its own eligibility requirements based on the number and percentage of "formula children" (students in poverty, in foster care, on TANF, etc.). Basic Grants go to nearly all eligible districts, while Concentration Grants target those with very large numbers or proportions of formula children; Targeted and EFIG formulas weigh children in higher-poverty districts more heavily to allocate additional funds. However, because Title I is not fully funded, actual allocations are often reduced from the authorized amounts, and total funding varies widely across districts, sometimes from only a few hundred dollars to over $5,000 per formula child. This limits schools' capacity to invest in supports beyond basic academic interventions. For more information, see All4Ed, "Title I of ESEA: How the Formulas Work," March 2023, https://all4ed.org/publication/title-i-of-esea-how-the-formulas-work/.

[18]High-poverty elementary and middle schools are also more likely to receive Title I funds: nearly all schools at these levels with 90 percent or more students from low-income families receive Title I support, compared with just 76.6 percent of similarly high-poverty high schools, underscoring a funding gap at the secondary level. For more information, see All4Ed, "Title I At-A-Glance," All4Ed, 2023, https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Title-I-At-A-Glance.pdf.

[19]Paula S. Nurius and Hazel J. Markus, "Chapter 4: Self-Understanding and Self-Regulation in Middle Childhood," in Development During Middle Childhood: The Years From Six to Twelve, (Washington, DC: National Research Council, 1984).

[20]Latino students are disproportionately excluded from rigorous academic pathways such as Advanced Placement (AP) and other advanced courses due to systemic barriers that limit access and reinforce inequitable expectations. This academic exclusion, combined with inadequate mental health supports and a lack of culturally responsive instruction, undermines students' sense of belonging and their ability to fully engage in school. Without coordinated, whole-student supports that affirm students' identities, provide meaningful opportunities for challenge, and address emotional and social needs, Latino students face heightened risk of disengagement and dropout. The Shut Out report underscores how these barriers are interconnected and highlights the importance of equitable access to advanced coursework and supportive school climates in strengthening Latino student outcomes. This consideration is particularly important because it is often overlooked. For more information, see Kayla Patrick, Jonathan Davis, and Allison Rose Socol, "Shut out: Black and Latino Students and Students from Low-Income Backgrounds Are Denied Access to AP Stem Opportunities," EdTrust, April 7, 2022, https://edtrust.org/press-room/shut-out-black-and-latino-students-and-students-from-low-income-backgrounds-are-denied-access-to-ap-stem-opportunities/.

[21] UnidosUS, "Nationwide Wake-Up Call: Our Students Are Not All Right," UnidosUS Progress Report, March 27, 2025, https://unidosus.org/progress-report/nationwide-wake-up-call-our-students-are-not-all-right/#:~:text=Reading%20scores%20decline,and%20that%20is%20not%20insignificant.

[22]National Center for Education Statistics, "Dropout Rates," Institute of Education Sciences, May 2024, https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16.

[23] Children at Risk, "Ensuring the Mental Well-Being of Latino Children: The Importance of School-Based Mental Health Services and Parent Intervention" CHILDREN AT RISK, December 6, 2023, https://childrenatrisk.org/ensuring_the_mental_well-being_of_latino_children/.

[24]Research indicates that school-based mentoring relationships are associated with stronger school attachment and lower engagement in risky behaviors such as substance use and violence, with school attachment functioning as a mediator between mentoring and reduced risk outcomes. The earlier mentoring relationships begin, particularly in eighth or ninth grade, the greater the opportunity to strengthen students' sense of belonging during the high-risk transition to high school. This suggests that mentoring not only supports students' connection to school but also contributes to healthier behavioral trajectories, which, in turn, can support academic persistence and reduce dropout risk. For more information, see Eric Jenner, Katherine Lass, Sarah Walsh, Hilary Demby, Rebekah Leger, and Gretchen Falk, "Effects of Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Program within a Randomized Controlled Trial," Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness 16, no. 3 (November 2022): 473–500, https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2022.2130119.

[25]Evidence links punitive school discipline practices (e.g., suspensions, expulsions, zero-tolerance policies) to long-term mental, behavioral, and physical health risks, including depression, substance use disorders, suicide, and adverse adolescent health outcomes. Latino and Black students are disproportionately subjected to exclusionary discipline, compounding existing racial and socioeconomic inequities. This research positions school climate and disciplinary policy as both educational and public health concerns, reinforcing the rationale for community school models and other whole-student frameworks that integrate academic instruction with mental health services, family engagement, and culturally responsive supports. For more information, see Catherine Duarte, Candice Moses, Melissa Brown, Sandhya Kajeepeta, Seth J. Prins, Janelle Scott, and Mahasin S. Mujahid, "Punitive School Discipline as a Mechanism of Structural Marginalization with Implications for Health

Inequity: A Systematic Review of Quantitative Studies in the Health and Social Sciences Literature," Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 1519, no. 1 (2022): 129. https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14922.

[26] Afterschool Alliance, "21st Century Community Learning Centers," Afterschool Alliance, 2025, https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policy21stcclc.cfm.

[27] Ibid.

[28]Afterschool Alliance, "21st Century Community Learning Centers: Accelerating Learning Supporting Families. Earning Results.," Afterschool Alliance, May 2024, https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/21stCCLC-Overview-2024.pdf.

[29] Afterschool Alliance, "Absenteeism - 21st CCLC Programs," Afterschool Alliance, 2024, https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/21st%20CCLC-Absenteeism-2024.pdf.

[30]Stephen Kostyo and Tiffany Miller, "Federal Funding Sources for Community Schools ," Learning Policy Institute, June 2023, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/4087/download?inline=&file=Federal_Funding_Community_Schools_REPORT.pdf.

[31] Institute for Educational Leadership, "Full-Service Community Schools & Promise Neighborhoods Grants," Institute for Educational Leadership, February 11, 2025, https://iel.org/promise-neighborhood-full-service-community-school-grants/.

[32]Under the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant program, discretionary awards are made through a competitive process and are limited in duration and scope. Grants fund projects for a period of up to five years (60 months), including an initial planning portion of up to 10 percent of the total award in the first year, and generally require non-federal matching contributions. Funds must be expended within the defined project period, constraining long-term sustainability and scale, and award priorities may further limit permissible uses of funding. For more information, see Department of Education, "Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) Program: Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Grant Competition Overview," Department of Education, June 2023, https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2023/06/FSCS_FY23_Competition-Overview_06.07.2023.pdf.

[33]In December 2025, the Department of Education notified a group of Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grantees that their funding would not be continued after December 31, 2025. With the future of this support now uncertain, districts and community partners face increased strain as they attempt to sustain critical programs, maintain partnerships, and plan for long-term student support without guaranteed federal resources. For more information, see Erik Peterson, "Full-Service Community Schools Grants Provide Critical Supports to Students and Families," Afterschool Alliance, December 22, 2025, https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolSnack/Full-Service-Community-Schools-grants-provide-critical-supports_12-22-2025.cfm.

[34]Figure 1 presents a U.S. map depicting the distribution of Full-Service Community School grant funding by state in 2023. States are color-coded by total FSCS funding received, with darker shades indicating higher levels of investment. This visual highlights geographic variation in grant allocation, illustrating which states received the most substantial support to implement or expand community school initiatives in response to local needs. For more information, see Institute for Educational Leadership, "Full-Service Community Schools & Promise Neighborhoods Grants," Institute for Educational Leadership, February 11, 2025, https://iel.org/promise-neighborhood-full-service-community-school-grants/.

[35]Full-Service Community School grants range from $2.5 million to $15 million, with some awards reaching up to $50 million, depending on the needs and scale of the community served. This variation reflects the flexibility built into the FSCS program to address diverse local contexts, including differences in student population size, urban or rural settings, levels of poverty, and the complexity of barriers faced by schools. Figure 1 illustrates how these funding levels are distributed across communities nationwide, highlighting the program's capacity to tailor investments to local needs and readiness for implementation. For more information, see Institute for Educational Leadership, "Full-Service Community Schools & Promise Neighborhoods Grants," Institute for Educational Leadership, February 11, 2025, https://iel.org/promise-neighborhood-full-service-community-school-grants/.

[36]Communities In Schools (CIS) is a national nonprofit that surrounds students with a community of support inside schools, connecting them with resources and caring adults to remove barriers, improve attendance, reduce dropout rates, and help them succeed in school and life. For more information, see Communities in Schools, "Mission and History," Communities In Schools, 2026, https://www.communitiesinschools.org/mission-and-history/.

[37]Communities In Schools (CIS) employs an evidence-based, whole-school approach to deliver tiered supports that are tailored to the needs of each school community and its students. Services are provided at three levels: Tier 1 includes school-wide support for all students; Tier 2 offers targeted group interventions; and Tier 3 provides individualized, one-on-one support for students with the greatest needs. Case management is a collaborative process designed to establish a support system for students at risk of dropping out. Through this process, CIS staff partner with these students to develop individual plans and goals. Case-managed students receive a combination of Tier II and Tier III supports, depending on the intensity and nature of their needs. For more information, see Communities In Schools,"Our Approach," Communities In Schoo1, 2026, https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-approach/.

[38]Communities in Schools, "State Data Profile SY 2023-2024," Communities In Schools, 2025, https://www.communitiesinschools.org/articles/article/2022-2023-data-book-and-state-profiles/.

[39]Communities In Schools (CIS) utilizes a school-based site coordinator to assess student needs and coordinate access to community resources, ensuring each student receives individualized academic, social, and emotional support. The CIS framework, known as Integrated

Student Supports, focuses on whole-child support by working with school staff to bring in community resources and partners that address the needs of students, families, and the school as a whole. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, CIS interventions are specifically tailored to each school's unique context and needs. The CIS site coordinator collects data and feedback to support continuous assessment and improvement, thereby optimizing program impact over time. For more information, see Communities In Schools, "Our Approach," Communities In Schools, 2026, https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-approach/.

[40]Federal demographic data for Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) is limited; most reporting is only available at the state or program level and rarely includes high school-specific information. For this reason, Communities In Schools (CIS) data is used here, as it provides the most comprehensive and nationally consistent demographic breakdown of students and their characteristics.

[41]Data presented in this section is from Communities In Schools' 2023-24 school year report. For more information, see Communities in Schools, "Data Book 2023-24," Communities In Schools, 2025, https://www.communitiesinschools.org/media/filer_public/b5/7e/b57e351a-36d6-4f8f-bd58-b4d4a51c25c6/sy23-24_cis_data_book.pdf.

[42]Case-managed students may have multiple documented needs. Reported figures are not mutually exclusive and reflect student characteristics identified through Communities In Schools' case management process during the 2023–24 school year. These data illustrate the prevalence of high-need conditions addressed through integrated student support models. For more information, see Communities in Schools, "Data Book 2023-24," Communities In Schools, 2025, https://www.communitiesinschools.org/media/filer_public/b5/7e/b57e351a-36d6-4f8f-bd58-b4d4a51c25c6/sy23-24_cis_data_book.pdf.

[43]This figure illustrates changes in key student outcomes associated with community school implementation. The top panel reports percentage-point reductions in chronic absenteeism and suspensions, where negative values indicate improvement. The bottom panel shows changes in math and English language arts achievement, measured in standard deviations. Results are presented for all students and disaggregated by student subgroups. Across outcomes, community school strategies are associated with improved attendance, fewer disciplinary actions, and higher academic performance. Notably, gains are consistently larger for historically underserved groups, including Hispanic students, English learners, and students from low-income households, suggesting these approaches both improve overall school outcomes and help narrow persistent equity gaps, particularly at the high school level, where attendance, behavior, and academic progress are closely linked to graduation and postsecondary success. For more information, see Walker Swain et al., "Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence from California," Learning Policy Institute, September 16, 2025, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/ca-community-schools-impact-student-outcomes-report.

[44]Table note: Reported outcomes are drawn from state and district evaluations and reflect the most recent publicly available data as of January 2026. Findings are not uniformly causal or consistently disaggregated by subgroup, and many evaluations report schoolwide outcomes rather than effects for Latino students, Title I populations, or high school subgroups. Outcome metrics vary across studies and include percentage-point differences, percent changes, and standardized effect sizes (SD); measures are reported as presented in the original evaluations.

[45]Walker Swain et al., "Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence from California," Learning Policy Institute, September 16, 2025, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/ca-community-schools-impact-student-outcomes-report.

[46]NYC Public Schools Info Hub, "NYC Community Schools: Our Results," NYC Public Schools Info Hub, 2026, https://infohub.nyced.org/in-our-schools/working-with-nycps/community-schools/nyc-community-schools-our-results.

[47]Anna Maier, "New Mexico Community School Profile: Peñasco Independent School District," Learning Policy Institute, September 25, 2024, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/new-mexico-community-school-penasco-brief.

[48]Amy Skinner, Anna Maier, and Tiffany Miller, "Two Very Different States, One Shared Strategy: Community Schools Are Helping Students Succeed in California and Kentucky," Learning Policy Institute, December 9, 2025, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/two-very-different-states-one-shared-strategy-community-schools-are-helping-students-succeed.

[49]This pattern highlights how community school strategies have been more extensively developed and evaluated in elementary settings, while high school frameworks remain less common and less studied. These findings underscore the importance of further research and program adaptation to more effectively meet the distinct academic and developmental needs of adolescents in community school environments. For more information, see Walker Swain et al., "Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence from California," Learning Policy Institute, September 16, 2025, https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/ca-community-schools-impact-student-outcomes-report.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52]This table details the distribution of 21st CCLC participants by student group, emphasizing the program's reach within historically marginalized populations. The data underscores the equity-driven design of 21st CCLC and its capacity to expand educational opportunity for those most in need. For more information, see Afterschool Alliance, "21st Century Community Learning Centers: Accelerating Learning Supporting Families. Earning Results," Afterschool Alliance, March 2025, https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/issue_briefs/21st-CCLC-Overview-2025.pdf.

[53]The table includes both academic outcomes (e.g., test scores, GPA, credits earned) and whole-student indicators (e.g., school belonging, engagement, and behavior). This broader set of measures is important because adolescent success is influenced by more than academic

performance alone. School connectedness and social-emotional supports are strong predictors of persistence, attendance, and graduation, particularly for students in high-poverty, Title I settings. Including these indicators provides a more complete picture of program impact and aligns with whole-student policy priorities.

[54]Afterschool Alliance, "21st Century Community Learning Centers: Accelerating Learning Supporting Families. Earning Results," Afterschool Alliance, March 2025, https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/issue_briefs/21st-CCLC-Overview-2025.pdf.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58]American Institute for Research, "What We Know About the Impact of the 21st CCLC Program," American Institute for Research, 2015, https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/What-We-Know-21st-CCLC-April-2015.pdf.