

# 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Columbia County, GA



Improving student performance and classroom behavior through academic enrichment, recreation, arts, character development, tutoring and homework support.



## A Snapshot from a Participant's Perspective



**It's 3:30 pm at Jenna's afterschool program** in Columbia County, Georgia, and everyone is dancing. Jenna is a fourth grader—one of the dozens of participants in her school's 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program—and she has joined others in their routine of five minutes of dancing before the afterschool program starts in order to refocus and infuse some new enthusiasm into their day.



**At 3:35 pm**, the music stops and Jenna joins her peers to gather in a circle for an activity called, "the talking stick." Only the student holding the stick at the center of the circle is allowed to speak. When her turn comes, Jenna enters the circle and shares a story about an experience that she and a friend had in art class earlier in the day. After everyone goes, Jenna walks over to grab a snack of graham crackers and chocolate milk to do her homework.



**It is now 4:10 pm** and Jenna and a group of her peers join afterschool counselors Dante and Sarah, who lead a drama program at the 21st CCLC. Jenna spends the next 45 minutes learning acting techniques and rehearsing her lines for the Wizard of Oz play that she will star in two weeks from today. At 5:00 pm, Jenna walks down the hall to join her crafts group in making "rock buddies" to take home tomorrow.



**At 5:30 pm**, the craft group activity ends and Jenna joins all the students in the gym for a positive youth development activity designed to build the 40 developmental assets children need to grow into responsible adults. Today they are working on commitment to learning, social competencies and empowerment. The big group breaks up into smaller groups of about 10 students who then sit in story circles. Jenna starts the story in her circle. "I am afraid of flying monkeys." Her friend sitting next to her said: "Monkeys like to eat bananas." Each student adds a sentence using a key word from the previous sentence, and so on. The story takes many twists and turns.

**To get the students to think deeper**, the afterschool counselor asks students to think about what they imagined the end of the story would be based on the opening sentence. How was the actual conclusion of the story different? How did each individual's sentence contribute to the overall story? Each student gets an opportunity to talk about their sentence and what role it played in changing the story.

**Across town at the middle school**, Jenna's sister, Janessa, is participating in a cooking exercise based on a book they are reading about early American life during the regular school day. The task at hand is to create johnny cakes, a staple the early settlers, made out of corn meal. The teacher tells the story of how this flattened cornbread might be all that a family would have to eat all day. This leads to a discussion about hunger in America today.



**On the way home**, Jenna chats about her upcoming play and Janessa tells their dad about johnny cakes. Her dad tells them that his grandmother used to make johnny cakes when he was their age. "I will make you some," said Janessa. "That sounds like fun," said their dad. "I think it is awesome that you and your sister are learning so much in the afterschool program."



## A Model of High-Quality Expanded Learning

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs) by Columbia County Community Connections (CCCC) offer students opportunities for academic enrichment, tutorial and support services, as well as literacy and related educational development after the school day ends. 21st CCLCs incorporate the principles of high-quality expanded learning in the following ways:

### School-Community Partnerships

Columbia County 21st CCLCs build upon strong partnerships with community organizations, academic institutions and local government. Partners include the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council, Junior Achievement, the Chamber of Commerce, dozens of private businesses, several churches, local banks, Augusta State University, Augusta Technical College, the Greater Augusta Partnership for Literacy, civic organizations and several local governments. Additionally, community volunteers regularly visit the programs to give guest presentations and volunteer.

Strong relationships with schools are a cornerstone of each 21st CCLC in Columbia County. Each program takes place in a school and is run by a coordinator—usually a teacher at the school where the program takes place. Columbia County 21st CCLC communicates regularly with daytime teachers and employs some of them in the afterschool programs. Principals also collaborate and share information with the project director and Title I director.

### Engaged Learning

Dozens of teachers and youth development workers engage students through activities in participating schools that nurture positive youth development and engage students in learning. Students participate in a variety of 30-minute hands-on activities that incorporate the arts, computers, photography and much more. With the smaller class sizes, teachers have more time to spend on individual students to build deeper relationships. Students get the opportunity to have a say which activities offered at their site.

The ratio of program staff to students is 1:10 for academics and 1:15 for enrichment activities.

### Learning Time after School and during the Summer

Columbia County 21st CCLC operates from 3:30 to 6:00 pm at the elementary sites five days per week and from 2:45 to 5:45 pm four days per week at the middle and high school sites. Some sites offer before-school activities. Staff members plan activities based on the school curriculum—ensuring that each activity is aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards. During the summer, students get a preview of upcoming material, lots of physical activity, arts enrichment and educational field trips to college campuses, historical sites and museums. Summer sessions usually last three to four weeks with 24 hours of instruction per week.

### Family Engagement

Each quarter, the Columbia County 21st CCLCs hold a family engagement event so that parents can see what their children do in the program. Parents also have opportunities to get involved with the program through tutoring, serving snacks, chaperoning and more. In addition, CCCC makes after-hours phone calls to parents to share what the students are doing in afterschool.

### Health and Wellness

Students are provided with daily snacks to help them get sufficient calories to last through the day's activities. Golden Harvest Food Bank, a dozen churches and Kellogg's provide additional snacks for students to take home on the weekends. Energizers and physical activities are incorporated throughout the schedule.

### Affordability and Sustainability

**Size:** 400 elementary, middle and high school students are served at five sites

**Annual Operating Cost:** Approximately \$1,750 per student

### Funding Sources and Government Partners:

Columbia County Board of Education  
Georgia Department of Education  
Georgia Department of Human Services  
Columbia County Board of Commissioners  
City of Grovetown  
City of Harlem  
Columbia County Juvenile Court  
Columbia County Sheriff's Office  
Columbia County Library