



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Afterschool Professional Week Celebration

The Nebraska Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) team is proud to celebrate the state's dedicated educators and staff who work to offer quality afterschool programs to students during Afterschool Professional Week April 20-24. These dedicated individuals play a vital role in the lives of Nebraska's youth, providing safe, engaging, and enriching environments that support academic success, social-emotional development, and overall well-being.

Across Nebraska, 21st CCLC programs serve K-12th grade students at 120 afterschool sites statewide. During the 2024-2025 school year alone, 17,518 students participated in afterschool programming with 6,464 youth attending summer programs.

Afterschool programs in Nebraska offer a diverse range of opportunities for students beyond the traditional school day. From homework help and tutoring to STEM activities, arts and crafts, sports, and leadership development, these programs empower young people to explore their interests, build positive relationships, and develop essential life skills.

"Afterschool professionals are the backbone of our efforts to support Nebraska's children and families" said Nebraska's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC State Coordinator Erika Wibbels. "Their dedication and passion create positive and lasting impacts on the lives of young people across the state. This week is an opportunity to celebrate their hard work and commitment."

Afterschool staff's impact is reflected in student feedback, with Nebraska 3rd–5th grade participants reporting that "I enjoy coming to this program most of the time" at an average of **3.25 out of 4** and reporting that "adults in this program treat kids with respect" at an average of **3.52 out of 4**, based on more than 4,100 survey responses.

The impact of afterschool programs extends far beyond the individual child. These programs provide crucial support for working families, ensuring children have a safe and supervised place to learn and grow while their parents are at work. Afterschool staff—more than half who are age 30 or younger—bring energy and commitment to their roles, as they enjoy being with the students and understand the impact it has on students. Many are pursuing or holding postsecondary education and reporting strong alignment between their work and professional goals.

Throughout Afterschool Professional Week, schools, community organizations, and families are encouraged to show their appreciation for the afterschool professionals who make a difference in their communities!

Afterschool Professional Week serves as a reminder of the critical role these professionals play in shaping the future of Nebraska. By providing consistent support, mentorship, and enriching experiences, they are helping to build a brighter future for the state's children and communities.

To learn more about afterschool programs in Nebraska and how you can support afterschool professionals, please visit <https://www.education.ne.gov/21stcclc/>

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