

21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Program Request for Waiver

The purpose of the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program is the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

The purpose of this notification is to inform the public of the intention of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to apply for flexibility under the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in light of the continued disruption to learning caused by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic and unprecedented obstacles schools, teachers, students, and their families are facing as the 2020-2021 school year begins, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) is offering flexibility to States regarding the requirement in section 4201(b)(1)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The requirement is that a 21st CCLC program operate “during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess).”

Given the hybrid approach some local educational agencies (LEAs) are considering in which students are in school part of the week and participating in remote learning during other times, USED has recognized that students may benefit from dedicated personnel and enhanced technological resources. The personnel and resources may help students better engage with remote lessons, independent work that is assigned, and other academic enrichment activities **during the portion of the week when they are not physically present in school but school is in session remotely for some portion of the day.**

For that reason, pursuant to the authority under section 8401(b) of the ESEA, USED is inviting all states to request a waiver, for the 2020-2021 school year, of the requirement in ESEA section 4201(b)(1)(A) that restricts activities provided by a 21st CCLC program to activities provided only during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session. **With waiver approval, the MSDE may permit 21st CCLC programs to provide supplemental activities when school is in session but students are not receiving in-person instruction, such as by providing additional academic supports during remote learning through the grant.** All other requirements for a 21st CCLC program continue to apply.

Prior to application for the waiver, the MSDE is providing opportunity for comment. This waiver would apply to existing 21st CCLC grantees that provide services to schools in 16 local school systems in Maryland. In order to qualify the 21st CCLC grantee would need to obtain permission from the Local Superintendent, school principal, and the MSDE. Please submit any comments regarding application for this waiver to Rhodri Evans, Lead Academic Policy Specialist, by email at rhodri.evans@maryland.gov by October 30, 2020. If you have questions, please contact Mary L. Gable, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy, by email at mary.gable@maryland.gov or by phone at 410-767-0472.