



What is the School of the 21st Century?

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL OF THE 21st CENTURY?

The *School of the 21st Century* (21C), also known as Family Resource Centers in some communities, is a school-based child care and family support model that promotes the optimal growth and development of children beginning at birth. The 21C model transforms the school into a year-round, multi-service center providing services from early morning to early evening.

Since 1988, more than 1200 schools in 20 states have implemented the program. The model has proven successful in urban, rural and suburban areas, as well as in affluent, middle class and poor communities. Both Connecticut and Kentucky have launched statewide initiatives based on the model, and with the growing public interest in early childhood development, more and more states are starting pilot initiatives.

BACKGROUND

The *School of the 21st Century* was created by Yale University Professor Edward Zigler, one of the principal architects of the federal Head Start program. The 21C model provides a response to changes in patterns of work and family life in recent decades that have meant new concerns for parents, especially a pressing need for affordable, quality child care. The model also helps educators ensure that children arrive at school ready to learn and receive the support they need to succeed academically.

Although the wisdom of school-linked services is now widely accepted, when 21C was first launched in Independence, MO in 1988, it was the first national initiative to capitalize on the natural synergy of family and children's services connected to schools.

The flexibility of the 21C/FRC model appeals to many diverse communities; each school tailors the model to match its own needs and resources. In many communities, 21C serves as an umbrella for an expanded array of family support services including adult education, youth development and social services.

MODEL COMPONENTS

Core components of the 21C/FRC model are:

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR PARENTS: This family outreach component focuses not only parents of school-age children, but also on parents of children ages 0-3. Recognizing parents' important role in their child's development before they ever come to school, 21C schools offer home visits, playgroups, and workshops to parents of young children.

PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE: 21C schools provide high-quality, developmentally-appropriate child care services for children ages 3-5 at the school or at a school-linked site, laying the groundwork for positive relationships between schools and families and children's later success in school.

BEFORE-, AFTER-SCHOOL AND VACATION CARE FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN: Either on site or at a linked site, 21C schools provide diverse, supervised activities for school-age children. School-age child care enables children to learn, grow and socialize in a safe environment during non-school hours.

HEALTH EDUCATION AND SERVICES: In collaboration with community-based health care providers, 21C schools offer a range of services including: health, nutrition and fitness education, physical health services, dental assessments and mental health services. Schools also make changes to snacks and menus to reflect children's nutritional needs.

NETWORKS AND TRAINING FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS: To strengthen the quality of child care in the community, 21C schools initiate relationships with local child care providers through a child care provider network. The network offers training opportunities, support groups and newsletters to support child care providers in the community.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES: 21C schools inform families about a wide range of services pertaining to the well-being of children and families that are available in the community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

While there is tremendous flexibility in how 21C is implemented, all 21C schools share a common foundation, the 21C guiding principles:

- strong parental support and involvement
- universal access to child care achieved through sliding scale fees
- programmatic focus on the physical, social, emotional as well as intellectual development of children
- quality programming as measured by staff qualifications, staff-child ratios, group size, staff turnover and other relevant criteria
- professional training and advancement opportunities for child care providers
- non-compulsory programming utilized at the discretion of the family.

FINANCING THE SCHOOL OF THE 21st CENTURY

There is enormous variety in the ways that different schools and districts finance their 21C programs. Many schools are able to completely fund the child care components through sliding scale fees paid by parents. In less affluent communities, some 21C services are paid for through public funds such as Title I. 21C schools usually require some initial start-up funds to create or renovate space or pay for outreach components. Start-up grants often come from local foundations, businesses or through reallocation of existing school district funds. Several states including Kentucky, Connecticut and Arkansas have made funding available to launch and support 21C/FRC programs.

BENEFITS OF THE SCHOOL OF THE 21st CENTURY

Evaluations of the 21C model at several sites have identified the following benefits:

For children:

- Enhanced school readiness and improved academic achievement
- Increased consistency of care and time spent with adult supervision
- Reduction in behavioral problems and decreased need for special services

For parents:

- Increased satisfaction and involvement with the school
- Reduction in missed work and stress due to failure of child care arrangements

For schools:

- Enhanced relationships with parents and community
- Greater understanding of the needs of incoming school populations.

21C NETWORK

Schools interested in implementing the School of the 21st Century model are encouraged to become members of the 21C Network established and maintained by Yale University. Through the network, Yale keeps schools informed about research findings, new funding opportunities, and implementation lessons for school-based and school-linked child care and family support services. Members of the network are also able to communicate with each other regarding implementation strategies.

The 21C Network provides several different levels of membership tailored to meet the needs of sites just beginning implementation as well as mature sites interested in continuous quality improvement. For more information about membership options, contact the School of the 21st Century office at Yale University.

DEMONSTRATION SITES

Twelve sites around the nation have been selected to serve as models for those interested in implementing the *School of the 21st Century*. If you are interested in visiting one of these sites, please contact the School of the 21st Century office at Yale University..

Arkadelphia, Arkansas
Batesville, Arkansas
Hamburg, Arkansas
Paragould, Arkansas
Leadville, Colorado
Bridgeport, Connecticut
Stamford, Connecticut
Catlettsburg, Kentucky
Somerset, Kentucky
Ayer, Massachusetts
Harwich, Massachusetts
Independence, Missouri

THE ROLE OF YALE UNIVERSITY

Since the inception of 21C, Yale University has provided leadership and technical assistance to 21C schools. In addition to ongoing consultation with 21C schools, Yale also conducts annual training and comprehensive evaluation efforts.

For more information about the School of the 21st Century, please contact us at the address below.

SCHOOL OF THE 21st CENTURY

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