



# A Quick Guide to 21C

## What is 21C?

21C = *School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, a responsive school that proactively develops services that address changing family needs and provides family support.

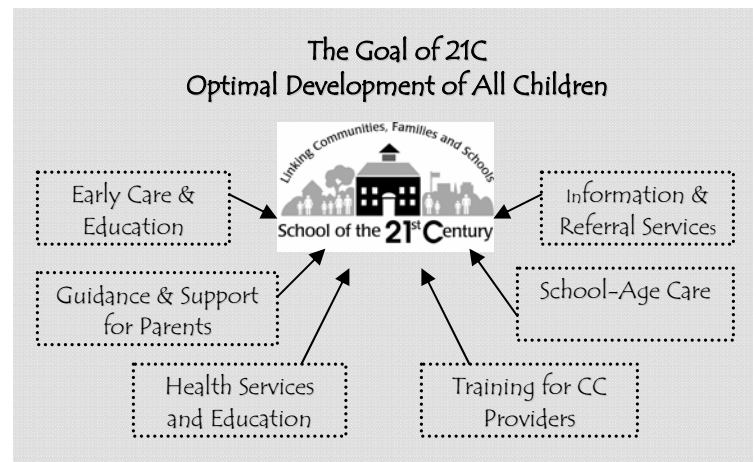
21C is the brainchild of Dr. Edward Zigler, a long-time advocate for children and a principal founder of Head Start. In the 1980's, Dr. Zigler looked at the national increase in the number of working parents and the stress these parents experienced. He suggested that schools address these new circumstances by stepping in to provide services. He asked,

*What if schools provided:*

- **SCHOOL-AGE CARE PROGRAMS** so working parents would know their children were in a safe and productive environment at the end of the school day?
- **EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PROGRAMS** to address early learning needs?
- **DEVELOPMENTAL TOOLS TO PARENTS** so they could do their best to raise healthy, happy children?
- A 'one-stop shop' with a wide range of **INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**, plus **REFERRALS** to any special services they may need?
- **PROFESSIONAL TRAINING TO PRIVATE PROVIDERS** to lay a foundation of balanced development, so children come to school ready to learn?
- **HEALTHY MEALS AND INFORMATION** to parents, so they could provide essential nutrients necessary for good growth and development?

From these questions an idea was born: a school-based model of comprehensive services related to family support, targeted to children, parents, child care providers, and teachers. The overarching goal of 21C is to promote the *optimal development of all children* through the following services:

- School-Age Care
- Early Care and Education Programs
- Guidance and Support for Parents
- Health and Education Services
- Networks and Training for Child Care Providers
- Information and Referral Services



Services offered by 21C are based on the following six guiding principals:

- High-quality programming
- Universal access to programs
- Non-compulsory programming
- Strong parental support and involvement
- Professional advancement opportunities for child care providers
- Focus on social, emotional, and intellectual development of children

## *How is 21C unique?*

21C distinguishes itself from other school reform movements by offering:

- **comprehensive services** to parents and their children from birth through school-age, across multiple fields
- **universal access** to these services for all children
- **flexibility** to address local needs

## *Where is 21C?*

Through implementation efforts of Dr. Matia Finn-Stevenson and her staff, there are now close to 1,400 21C schools around the country and we continue to welcome new schools every year. The School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program is a division of the **Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy**, housed at Yale University.

21C schools are located in many areas, including Connecticut, Arkansas, and neighboring Missouri and Kentucky. In both Kentucky and Connecticut, 21C sites are called Family Resource Centers (FRC).

**NOTE: 21CCLC = 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center**, a federal program that provides funds to state agencies. These moneys are distributed by the state through grants that are primarily used for after-school programs.

## *What support does 21C provide for member schools?*

- **Training:** Through national conferences, institutes, and local network meetings, participating programs receive professional development.
- **Technical assistance:** 21C staff and local trainers serve as liaison between 21C schools and the national office, organize conferences, evaluate programs, and provide technical support to 21C member schools.
- **On-site visits:** Trained 21C staff visit schools and provide feedback on ways to improve 21C services.
- **Model programs:** Several schools in Arkansas, and elsewhere, have been established as host sites; 21C members can visit these schools to see how a “model” 21C school operates.

## *Why 21C?*

Research has shown that 21C:

- Improves academic outcomes for participating children
- Improves children’s social and emotional development
- Improves parent-teacher relationships
- Reduces parents’ stress
- Provides a safe, supervised, supportive environment in which kids can grow and develop optimally

