

Report to the Legislature

Expanded Learning Opportunities Council

November 1, 2018



Recommendations to the Texas Legislature

Senate Bill (SB) 503, 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, created the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Council to study issues concerning ELO and develop a statewide plan with recommendations for ELO programs for public school students in Texas. Texas Education Code, Chapter 22, Subsection 1, Subchapter G, defines expanded learning as opportunities provided to public school students before school, after school, during summer hours or extended school day, an extended school year, or a structured learning program.

Expanded Learning Opportunities Council

The ELO Council proposes a state-level, systems approach to increasing access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities. Providing high-quality expanded learning opportunities is one way to support Texas students as they learn, thrive and prepare to pursue college, a career or the military. **The Council designed the recommendations such that if implemented in tandem, through coordinated efforts, alongside one another they will have greater impact – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.**

Through the process of research, discussion and presentations on the field of expanded learning, the Council developed three related recommendations. The proposed recommendations address the three components of expanded learning that, based on research, will lead to the greatest impact and the highest return on investment. The Council encourages the Legislature to read and review this report, and most importantly act to ensure that all students in Texas have access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities.



Recommendation: Direct Texas Education Agency (TEA) to adopt standards of quality for expanded learning programs.

Support and develop high-quality programs by directing TEA to adopt quality standards for expanded learning programs. Provide resources to create awareness and guidance on quality standards to providers, school districts and parents. Allocation of resources would support technical assistance and coordination.

Rationale: High-quality programs are linked to positive outcomes for children and youth; including an increase in school day attendance, high school graduation rates, improved academic performance and health and wellness outcomes. Public investment should be strategically directed to support quality programming. Program providers should receive support from TEA.

Recommendation: Direct resources to support multi-agency data collection and infrastructure.

Support the development of a comprehensive multi-agency data infrastructure system which includes program location and capacity, number of youth served, activities offered, and other measures identified as critical by state agencies, school districts, and communities.

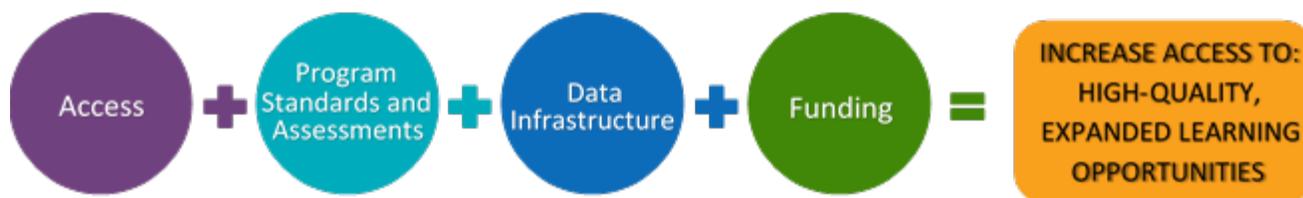
Rationale: State level data infrastructure will build upon the data that will be collected as part of the passage of SB 1404. This legislation passed during the 85th legislative session and directs TEA to collect information on voluntary expanded learning opportunities that occur afterschool and during the summer at school campuses beginning in 2019-2020. State level data infrastructure that provides a system of collection of common data elements will enhance understanding of the landscape of expanded learning programs and provide opportunities for analysis of current capacity to serve students. It will also provide a description of critical programmatic elements, such as staff/student ratio. Without strong infrastructure and coordination, data alone will not increase awareness or support growth of quality programs. Data collected and available for analysis through infrastructure should be used to target investment to increase access, and provide relevant, actionable and timely information to policymakers, schools, parents, funders and communities.

Recommendation: Fund expanded learning programs.

Increase access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities for students across the state by allocating resources to programs for students in the most underserved areas. Funding should also be allocated to provide technical assistance, coordination and development of data infrastructure.

Rationale: In 2018, TEA received 148 applications totaling \$147 million for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) funding, the only federal funding specifically administered to support afterschool and summer programming. Of the 148 applications received, only 51 applications could be funded with Texas' existing federal allocations. This left \$82.7 million dollars in requested programs unfunded. Additionally, the data from the Afterschool Alliance states that 1.5 million Texas children would attend a program if one were available and affordable in their community. Access can be increased by expanding services in underserved areas and increasing the capacity of high-quality programs.

Formula for Increasing Access and Quality of Expanded Learning Programs Designed to Improve Outcomes for Students



Each recommendation, when implemented with sufficient resources and support will have a positive impact; support for programs plus support for systems is essential. The Council strongly recommends considering how investment in all three areas simultaneously will yield the most impactful results. Regional leaders across the state are working to provide high-quality expanded learning opportunities yet demand by Texas school districts, students and families for high-quality expanded learning opportunities is consistently not met. If additional resources are not allocated to support programs, inequity of opportunities and outcomes will not only persist but grow across the Lone Star State.

Background on the Council

The ELO Council is comprised of 13 professionals invested in supporting students through high-quality afterschool and summer learning experiences. Established during the 83rd Legislative session, the Council was charged with analyzing the landscape of expanded learning and making recommendations to increase opportunities for youth across the state. In this third report of the Council, recommendations are informed by the inequity of access to programs, and the critical importance of program quality, data infrastructure and data collection. Building on current data and the recommendations of the 2014 and 2016 reports, the Council recognizes that public investment is vital to expanding opportunities for students across Texas. As per the statute, the definition of expanded learning includes structured learning opportunities provided to public school students before school, afterschool and during the summer including extended school day and year. Expanded learning opportunities include the federally funded 21st CCLC, which based on [evaluation reports](#), demonstrate a correlation between program attendance and a decrease in school day disciplinary incidents and absences as well as higher high school graduation rates.

Throughout 2018, the Council met in person and via webinar to review current research and data. Through the process of design thinking, discussion, and facilitator led questioning and analysis, Council members came to consensus on the three recommendations outlined in this report. In addition to the recommendations, Council members have also developed a plan for

developing and disseminating additional communication materials for the myriad of stakeholders impacted by providing expanded learning opportunities for Texas students.

Embedded throughout the report, the Council has provided analysis of expanded learning opportunities across the Lone Star State. Through a research-based, collaborative process, the Council has identified opportunities for strategic investment by the legislature to amplify current resources and increase both access to and quality of afterschool and summer programming.

Introduction

Through multiple work sessions, the ELO Council identified several key findings that clearly demonstrate the value of investing in high-quality expanded learning and afterschool programs. In response, the Council is issuing this report in alignment with its charge to study the field and make aligned recommendations.

Research informed findings:

- High-quality expanded learning programs **promote learning and improved academic performance**, specifically among at risk youth.¹
- High-quality afterschool programs support the **greater achievement in math**, a foundation for preparing students for STEM careers.²
- High-quality afterschool programs, specifically the Texas ACE program, demonstrate a **significant relationship between regular program attendance and decreased school day disciplinary incidence**.³
- High-quality expanded learning programs **decrease the likelihood of dropping out of school**.⁴
- High-quality expanded learning programs **foster student engagement**, which in turn promotes a positive school culture.⁵
- High-quality expanded learning programs provide **opportunities to engage in vigorous physical activity, which can help combat rising obesity rates** linked to poor health outcomes in youth.⁶

¹ Lauer, P.A., Akiba, M., Wilkerson, S.B., Apthorp, H.S., Snow, & Martin-Glenn, M.L. (2006) Out of School Time Programs: A Meta-Analysis of Effects for At-Risk Students. *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 76, No.2 (summer 2006) pp. 275-313. American Educational Research Association.

² Vandell, D.L., Reisner, E.R. & Pierce, K.M. (2007). Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs. Report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

³ Huang, D., Sung Kim, Marshall, A. & Perez, P. (2005) Keeping Kids in School: An LA's BEST Example: A Study Examining the Long Term Impact of LA's BEST on Students' Dropout Rates. National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing. University of California, Los Angeles.

⁴ Heckman, P.E., Sanger, C. (2013). How Afterschool Programs Help Motivate and Engage More Young People in Learning, Schooling and Life. *Expanding Minds and Opportunities*. Collaborative Communications Group. Washington, D.C.

⁵ Heckman, P.E., Sanger, C. (2013). How Afterschool Programs Help Motivate and Engage More Young People in Learning, Schooling and Life. *Expanding Minds and Opportunities*. Collaborative Communications Group. Washington, D.C.

⁶ Knapp, N.F. & Schwanenflugel, P.J., (May, 2017) After-school Programs Do Work!. *Psychology Today Online*. Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/reading-minds/201705/after-school-programs-do-work>.

Council members drafted a logic model as part of their methodology to develop recommendations. The logic model outlined current resources as well as potential opportunities and pathways for implementation of the recommendations. Members articulated that **If a state-level systems approach is implemented to increase access to expanded learning opportunities and; if high-quality expanded learning opportunities are supported and; if data infrastructure is built and utilized to collect accurate and comprehensive data and; if public investment is made and sustained, then Texas children and youth will be prepared for success in college, a career or the military.**

Access to Programs

In 2018, the state of Texas received approximately \$106 million dollars to implement the federally funded 21st CCLC program. This funding provides afterschool and summer learning programs for approximately 100,000 students in rural, suburban and urban communities across the state. While this is one of the largest state allocations from the federal grant program, the program serves approximately 1.9% of Texas' school age population, a number derived from dividing the number of students served by the school age population. For the cycle 10 grant cycle, TEA received over 140 applications and was able to fund 51 grantees. In addition to this grant program, the [National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment](#) reports that subsidies administered through the Texas Workforce Commission support approximately 48,429 school age (5-12) children every month which represents a total of 44% of all children served through child care subsidy. Combined, the 21st CCLC and the TWC subsidies serve a total of 148,429 students, a small fraction of the 5.3 million students in Texas who would greatly benefit through access to quality afterschool and summer programs, particularly students most in need.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) reports that an additional 1.5 million Texas youth would participate in an afterschool program if one were accessible and affordable in their area and that 19% of Texas youth are at home unsupervised afterschool for an average of 7.7 hours. Currently, there is no comprehensive statewide database or data collection system to assess the location of programs or program capacity. Limited information can be accessed through the 2-1-1 system administered by local United Ways. Data can vary greatly between locally administered systems.

Research from the [Evaluations Backgrounder](#) brief, compiled by the Afterschool Alliance, states that sustained participation in high-quality expanded learning opportunities support decreased involvement in high-risk behaviors, improved physical health and increased attendance during the school day. A critical component of supporting current expanded learning programs and the development of emerging programs is to create awareness of the importance of high-quality expanded learning opportunities for all Texas students. Awareness of available high-quality programming increases utilization of programs. Access is achieved when programs are both available and utilized within communities. Given the potential impact, there is an opportunity to actively identify and coordinate other existing federal and state funding streams for

prevention well across multiple systems to ensure children and youth in need have access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities. The Council recommends support to increase access to high-quality programs across the state of Texas.

Components of High-Quality Expanded Learning Programs

The [Expanding Minds and Opportunities Compendium](#) provides multiple articles and case studies of afterschool and summer programs, arguing that high-quality expanded learning programs support increased school attendance, on-time grade promotion, increased engagement in learning and a positive school climate. Positive outcomes have been documented when students are consistently engaged in high-quality programs, and in the case of Texas, specifically youth who attend over 45 days of afterschool programming.

The Council recognizes that quality is multi-dimensional and refers to several operations within a given program. However, one set of commonly defined elements of high-quality programs are listed and defined in the table on the following page, based on the [Texas Standards of High Quality Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning Programs](#). These standards were developed in 2014 by a statewide advisory group through research of national standards, other states' standards, and best practices in youth development.

The quality of expanded learning programs can be measured, assessed and supported in a variety of ways, inclusive of school districts, community partners, funders and industry. Best practices in developing system-wide quality can be learned from the field of early childhood; and providers of expanded learning often collaborate, learn from and work to build on other successful educational initiatives. The field of evaluation has produced several validated program quality tools in addition to developing assessment tools and methodologies that will measure and support the outcomes of school and community-based expanded learning programs. Across the state of Texas, communities including Austin/Central Texas, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and their surrounding counties have developed systems of support for quality using the [Texas Standards for High Quality Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning Programs](#), the [Weikart YPQA tool](#), the AqUA tool assessed by [Dallas Afterschool](#) and the [Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets](#) survey. The Council recognizes these initiatives and asks the state to build on this work by supporting the adoption of state level standards for expanded learning programs. These initiatives implemented by local communities should be supported by a statewide structure to provide guidance on standards of high-quality programming. As the field of expanded learning evolves, there is potential for high-quality programs to be included in the broader educational system, through the accountability system and/or through alignment with other statewide education campaigns such as [60X30TX](#).

Quality Element	Evidence of Implementation
<i>Safe Environment, Health and Nutrition</i>	Offers a safe environment where children and youth have opportunities to practice healthy behaviors and have access to nutritious food
<i>Staff and Volunteer Management</i>	Has staff and volunteer management policies and practices that benefit children and youth and emphasize hiring and retaining qualified staff as part of their program implementation strategy
<i>Programming and Activities</i>	Provides a variety of activities that support the cognitive, social-emotional and physical development of all participants
<i>Diversity and Inclusion in Programming</i>	Allows all children and youth to thrive in the program with the recognition of differences in children and youth abilities, family structure, cultural background and economic resources
<i>Family Engagement and Community Partnerships</i>	Provides opportunities for meaningful participation by families and actively engages with other community organizations
<i>Relationships and Interactions</i>	Supports diverse interactions among children and youth, creates an environment that develops and maintains positive relationships, and consistently promotes social interactions among children and youth, staff and the community
<i>School Linkages</i>	Engages in regular communication with the school day staff and leadership to share resources and work toward positive outcomes for children and youth
<i>Program Sustainability, Evaluation and Awareness</i>	Conducts regular evaluation and uses the data to continually improve, promote sustainability and increase awareness of the program

Data Infrastructure

To accurately and meaningfully develop and support high-quality expanded learning programs, there is a need for clearly defined data points to be collected consistently and the need for an infrastructure with which to collect and analyze the data. A system would allow for the collection of longitudinal data which will demonstrate outcomes and longer-term impact. While this has been demonstrated through national research, additional data is needed that examines specific components of quality and program models in the context of the Texas landscape. Several communities have developed mapping databases designed to meet the demand for information about available expanded learning opportunities; however, these maps have

collected different data using different methodologies. A number of organizations have published their maps online including; [Excel Beyond the Bell San Antonio](#), the [Afterschool Access map](#) published by Dallas Afterschool, the [IGNITE initiative](#) of the Paso del Norte Health Foundation and the [Out 2 Learn](#) network in Houston.

These maps can provide data in building a more comprehensive access mapping database. Some mapping databases function as a directory for families to find programming for their children and rely heavily on programs to maintain their information. The regional networks can and should play a role in working with parents and families to understand and support high-quality programs. Others map specific funding streams or aligned networks and limit the directory to programs involved in that network. In both cases, the mapping tool has enabled the cities to better identify communities with limited access to programming and encourage investment in those regions. Given the role these tools have played in bolstering the funding strategies of several Texas communities, the ELO Council recommends a dedicated funding stream to further develop statewide data infrastructure that collects program location and service capacity in addition to linking to outcome data. A statewide data infrastructure would ideally include data from the public (i.e., schools), private (i.e., fee for service child care) and non-profit (i.e., community-based organizations that serve youth) entities. To fully and accurately answer the question of access across the state of Texas, a more comprehensive directory of programs across the state should be completed using data collection methods which build on existing community infrastructure. Accurate data and a responsive system are essential to analyzing issues of access, that will in turn allow strategic investment in areas most in need.

Expanded learning has and will continue to learn from the field of early learning, taking evaluation practices that have worked in educational contexts outside of K-12 education and develop best practices for data collection on program access and program quality. Data infrastructure will allow for aligned data collection across the state and create opportunities. A strong infrastructure will promote analysis and ensure validity of data. Without state-level infrastructure, data will continue to be siloed, resulting in inaccurate information making it challenging for parents looking for programs, educators interested in providing high-quality expanded learning and policymakers interested in supporting strategic investments. By using data to strategically target funds, elected officials and state agencies can provide greater accountability by working to ensure that funding is available for communities in need, and work to increase capacity in communities currently served.

Funding

The Council recommends a state funding stream, to be administered through TEA, to support high-quality expanded learning opportunities that include support directly to programs, technical assistance and capacity building. This recommendation is supported by data from the [Afterschool Alliance](#) which states that eight in 10 Texas parents support public funding for afterschool programs. Across the United States, states as diverse as Alaska, California and

Florida have used state funding to support expanded learning opportunities. Public funding is one of multiple streams to support afterschool and summer programming. Grantees of potential state funds would demonstrate how they will utilize best practices in implementation including but not limited to: readiness assessments, standards adoption and strong community partnerships.

Diversified Funding: the case of
Communities In Schools- North Texas

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the Communities In School (CIS) of North Texas has continued to leverage diversified funding in order to expand programs and meet the growing needs in Denton and Wise counties. Currently, CIS of North Texas provides case management and afterschool programming to more than 4,000 students at 36 campuses providing dual case management and afterschool programs to seven of those schools. CIS of North Texas has uniquely positioned itself to leverage public dollars through the federal 21st CCLC grant, Texas Education Agency funding allocated to Communities In Schools programs, as well as philanthropic dollars. This blending of funding allows CIS of North Texas to provide comprehensive services from high-quality afterschool to comprehensive case management. This is best practice for sustaining programs yet can be challenging to manage and sustain. Executive Director Ann Pape commented, "Leveraging dollars has allowed our organization to grow with our communities and support the whole child and whole family. State investment has been crucial in building a foundation for growth and is necessary to ensure the continued support of youth and families which includes afterschool and summer programming." Despite the success and longevity of CIS North Texas, Pape is always focusing on fundraising and exploring opportunities for new funding to increase program capacity and quality.

Currently, programs are often unsustainably funded by charitable community members, foundations and/or parent pay structures, resulting in program closures or programs changing location based on available funding, especially in low income communities. In recognition of the need for strategic investment, several communities in Texas have been able to secure short term, local funding to support regional out of school time mapping databases to define need to the funding community. A competitive grant program could be designed to work toward better outcomes for students and align with legislative and cross agency priorities, such as those outlined in initiatives including the Tri-Agency report, [Prosperity Requires Being Bold: Integrating Education and the Workforce for a Bright Texas Future](#), as well as other statewide priorities. To ensure public investments are both sustainable and effective, support and coordination from state agencies including TEA, Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and TWC would be evaluated and coordinated for maximum efficiency.

Conclusion

The ELO Council recommends that the Legislature dedicate state funding to implement and support high-quality expanded learning programs.

Investment should support quality initiatives for specific programs and ensure systemic support of consistent quality, which is why the Council has the recommendation that the TEA adopt statewide standards. Promotion or recommended adoption of quality standards without aligned resources will not promote the sustainable commitment to quality recommended by the Council. Resource allocation to support data collection and infrastructure ensures that investments are strategic and align with outcomes linked to impact.

Through implementation of the three recommendations included in this report, expanded learning opportunities supported by state-led data infrastructure, timely and accurate data and investment in high-quality programs will become an essential component of a successful education system. Increasing access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities for students across the state is critical to families and communities to ensure all students can be successful in school and prepared for college, career and their role in an ever-changing workforce.

Each recommendation enhances components of regionally developing systems into a state-wide system designed to exponentially improve student outcomes. Texas students deserve opportunities to enhance their ability to compete in an increasingly global marketplace, grow and develop into leaders of a strong Texas workforce and ensure that the Lone Star State remains a great place to live, work and grow.

Thank you to the 2018 Expanded Learning Opportunity Council members for dedicating their expertise and time to this work.

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