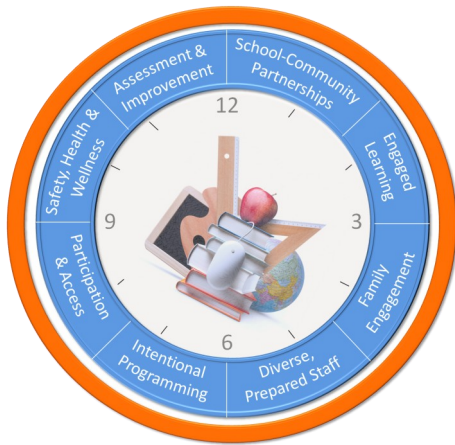


Principles of Effective Expanded Learning Programs: A Vision Built on the Afterschool Approach

Effective expanded learning programs help students succeed in school and in life.

Expanded learning opportunities are inclusive of before-school, afterschool, summer learning, and extended day or expanded learning time (ELT) programs. Decades of research documenting the outcomes of afterschool and summer programs reveal a core set of key principles that are essential to yielding the best results. Aligning the spectrum of expanded learning opportunities with these principles will ensure quality and consistency across all programs. This document can be used to guide expanded learning policy at the local, state and federal levels.



1. School-Community Partnerships: Strong partnerships between community organizations and schools are at the core of successful expanded learning programs. These partnerships should be characterized by alignment of goals and services, effective lines of communication, and data and resource sharing.

2. Engaged Learning: Expanded learning programs engage young people because they make learning meaningful and relevant. Activities tap in to a young person's interest, sparking their imagination and igniting a fire within. They engage young people initially by providing choice and voice over what is offered, and maintain engagement through positive relationships with adults and peers.

3. Family Engagement: A wide body of research points to active parent involvement in their child's education as a key factor in student success; community-based organizations, partnering with schools on expanded learning, can often help facilitate that involvement. Expanded learning programs that provide safe environments for children to learn, offer parental choice and facilitate communication are crucial to parents, schools and most of all students.


4. Intentional Programming: Explicit goals and intentionally designed activities that align with those goals are critical to the success of expanded learning programs. In addition, successful programs must also engage participants in meaningful ways and meet their developmental and academic needs.

5. Diverse, Prepared Staff: Successful expanded learning programs ensure that staffing ratios, qualifications, ongoing professional development and overall staff diversity are closely linked to program goals and activities. In most instances, staffing involves a combination of both in-school staff and community partners.


6. Participation & Access: Studies show that frequency and duration of participation matter; the more kids participate, the more likely they are to show academic gains. However, participation should not be mandatory; when children choose and direct their enrichment experiences, they become more ardent learners and stronger leaders.


7. Safety, Health & Wellness: Adequate space, supervision, and security are necessary for young people to have the comfort and freedom to focus solely on the task at hand. In addition, the best programs provide opportunities for exercise and access to nutritious meals that otherwise might be unavailable.


8. Ongoing Assessment & Improvement: Programs that employ sound data collection and management practices focused on continuous improvement have the most success in establishing and maintaining quality services. Frequent assessment (both informal and formal) and regular evaluation (both internal and external) are ingredients needed to refine and sustain expanded learning programs.



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