



every  
hour  
counts  
expanding learning so  
every student can thrive

## Value of Systems and Intermediaries

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*How do communities help more students succeed?*

### They Build Expanded-Learning Systems

Today we expect more of our students and graduates than ever before. Not only are academic expectations rising, but also employers say they want more emphasis on critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world world settings.<sup>1</sup>

With ever-increasing expectations, it's not surprising that schools struggle to squeeze everything — academics as well as social and emotional skills — into a six-hour day. So where and when do students learn these skills? In cities across the country, they do so through expanded-learning systems.

#### **A Coordinated, United Effort to Enrich Students' Learning**

An expanded-learning system engages students in high-quality learning and enrichment through after-school, summer, and other initiatives. It emphasizes improving access for underserved students, using resources efficiently, improving quality, and delivering results.

An expanded-learning system replaces a patchwork of fragmented service providers with a cohesive team that includes public agencies, service providers, businesses, funders, and schools. The team works together to create integrated programming that addresses the whole community's needs, makes better use of resources, and ensures quality activities and instruction.

Expanded-learning experiences typically are coordinated with in-school activities, and in a growing number of cities, they are incorporated into the school day.

#### **Expanded-Learning Systems in Action**

The content of expanded-learning activities varies, from science to performing arts, nature studies, and sports. But they all help students be more connected to school, build self-confidence, develop critical-thinking skills, and connect with caring adults.

The following stories show how expanded-learning systems are changing the lives of the students they serve.

### The Role of Intermediaries

The engine of an expanded-learning system is an organization called an intermediary. It unites stakeholders around a shared mission, coordinates and maximizes resources, and drives improvement throughout the community.

An intermediary's work includes:

- **Increasing access** by raising funds and targeting resources to where they are most needed as well as guiding policy change that supports expanded learning.
- **Driving improved student outcomes** by coordinating expanded learning with in-school learning.
- **Improving efficiency** by building relationships that help public agencies, funders, service providers, schools, and parents work together. Intermediaries also streamline logistics and operations, from scheduling facility use to providing transportation and snacks, creating a unified, cost-effective system.
- **Promoting continuous improvement** by collecting data about program effectiveness, setting shared expectations for quality, leading multi-year planning efforts, and providing training and professional development.

An intermediary elevates a community's expanded-learning programming by helping stakeholders become a cohesive team that can plan for the whole community's needs, make better use of resources, and learn from one another.

Intermediaries have helped raise millions of private and public dollars and create dedicated funding streams for expanded-learning opportunities. They have developed cost-effective program models to reach and engage more young people, and they have established quality standards and systems to improve quality and accountability.



## BUILDING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

An expanded-learning system depends on a healthy partnership between the school system's staff and devoted community members and leaders. Together, they work toward improving the educational experience of young people — all day long.

At PS 188 in Manhattan, **Expanded Schools by TASC** has joined with the school's leadership to redefine how learning is delivered. Teams of teachers and community educators develop lessons that complement the in-school curriculum. These lessons, taught by teachers and community educators, happen either after school or during the school day. For instance, a first-grade teacher worked with an after-school teaching artist to help students perform puppet shows using the short stories that they wrote in language arts class.

The **Family League of Baltimore** partners with the city, the state of Maryland, community groups, and more than three dozen city schools that serve 17,000 students. Together they identified goals that include reducing the number of suspensions, increasing the number of students reading at grade level, and decreasing student absenteeism.

In California, the **Partnership for Children & Youth** collaborates with a range of players on the Summer Matters campaign, a statewide initiative to expand and improve summer learning across the state. While each Summer Matters program is different, they have the same positive outcomes: The programs are demonstrating measurable positive impacts on grade-level vocabulary, work habits, and strengthening connections to peers and adults.

Each of the examples is anchored by a strong intermediary that brings together educators, community leaders, and other key players to give underserved students new opportunities for educational and career development. Their success helps make the case to public and private funders that these programs are a cornerstone to student achievement.

## A SHARED VISION FOR GOALS, QUALITY, AND OUTCOMES

Expanded-learning systems are most successful when all players have shared goals and systems in place to measure quality. In Boston, building on more than a decade of investment in after-school programming, youth-development leaders are now helping students to ACT: Achieve (by using self-management skills necessary to finish a task well), Connect (by developing communication and interpersonal skills), and Thrive (by persevering and maintaining the effort needed to be successful).

Using this framework, providers across the city are creating high-quality school, after-school, and summer programming aimed at building concrete skills that students will need in college and in a wide range of careers. For example, **Boston Public Schools** partnered with the community group Sociedad Latina to create a pilot summer school program that improves students' math and literacy skills. Using a hands-on approach to learning, teachers presented concepts like fractions and then reinforced them with activities, such as playing music and cooking, that built on the students' interests.

Boston is working to compile its success into a citywide results framework that examines the full range of K-12 out-of-school programming and assesses how the community-wide vision is performing in practice. With these data, the team will be able to make a research-based case that funding for after-school programming is money well spent.

## IMPROVING QUALITY AND DELIVERING RESULTS

Through its after-school and summer enrichment programs, the AfterZone gives students time to discover their passions — and adult support to build on what they enjoy and to develop skills for their futures. Students participate in a range of programs, from sailing, which teaches them math and meteorology, to solar-powered go-cart construction, which introduces them to green engineering and mechanics. All programs are led by community educators with expertise in relevant professional fields.

The **Providence After School Alliance (PASA)** led the development of the AfterZone. To make sure the AfterZone is as strong as it can be, PASA continually assesses the initiative and uses the findings to improve. It builds quality into its programming by bringing educators together, agreeing on indicators for success, finding reliable tools to measure progress, monitoring program quality, and creating shared action steps based on evaluations. This commitment to continuous improvement is paying off: Independent evaluators have found that 99 percent of middle school students who attended more than 100 days of PASA's AfterZone program graduated from high school. Among students who attended between 50 and 100 days, 97 percent graduated.

## You Can Help

Expanded-learning systems are a key lever of change in cities and communities. They achieve results that prepare young people for school, work, and life, and they should be a critical element of any effort to improve the educational and life experiences of students from underserved communities.

Everyone in a city or community — elected officials, community and business leaders, school board members, superintendents, teachers, community educators, foundations, students, and families — can help build and support high-quality expanded-learning systems.

### Local advocates of expanded-learning systems can:

- Adopt promising practices to build high-quality systems in their communities.
- Advocate for the development of an expanded-learning system infrastructure in their communities.
- Raise funding for system-building efforts.
- Support local, state, and federal policies that support expanded-learning systems.
- Invest resources in building staff expertise.
- Join our effort to make *every hour count*.

### Policymakers and funders can:

- Embrace intermediaries and expanded-learning systems as critical elements to support student success.
- Provide ongoing investments in intermediaries and system-building efforts.

- Hold providers accountable for youth learning.
- Provide incentives for collecting and using data on expanded-learning systems and student outcomes.
- Support policies that promote lasting expanded-learning systems.

### Educators and school systems can:

- View expanded-learning systems as core partners to help students succeed.
- Open their doors to community-based organizations to bring high-quality services to high-need communities at scale.

### Students and families can:

- Participate in advocating for and planning expanded-learning systems.
- Serve on advisory panels.
- Add their voices to expectations for high quality.

Every Hour Counts, formerly the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS), is a coalition of citywide organizations that increase access to quality learning opportunities, particularly for underserved students. The organization is a leading voice in promoting expanded-learning systems, which provide learning and enrichment through after-school, summer, and other initiatives. Expanded-learning systems help students be more connected to school, build self-confidence, and connect with caring adults, so every student can thrive.



[www.everyhourcounts.org](http://www.everyhourcounts.org)

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1 Sternberg, R. J. (June 17, 2013). Giving employers what they don't really want. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Giving-Employers-What-They/139877/>.