



every
hour
counts
expanding learning so
every student can thrive

Frequently Asked Questions

frequently asked questions

What is Every Hour Counts?

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.

Why expanded learning?

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 settings.¹

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.

What is an expanded-learning system?

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. This team 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.

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

Don't most children have access to this type of programming already?

No, they do not. Despite the documented benefits of out-of-school enrichment, more than 18 million young people in America lack access to high-quality after-school programs.² In most cases, families' income levels shape their options. Affluent families typically spend close to \$8,900 per child each year on enrichment, compared to families in the lowest income quintile, who spend slightly more than \$1,300 per child each year.³

Elected officials recognize the benefits after-school programs provide. In a 2004 survey, 22 percent of local elected officials said after-school care is their community's most critical program need.⁴ With ever-squeezed budgets, cities and communities must make sure every dollar is used effectively. Expanded-learning systems maximize city and private funding, and programs typically are delivered at little or no cost to families.



Who coordinates an expanded-learning system?

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.

What do intermediaries do?

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.

Do expanded-learning systems deliver results?

Yes. Expanded learning teaches students about academics, collaboration, and problem solving. They not only learn how to do better in school, they find new ways to ignite their passions — and to engage in learning and life.

Expanded learning also leads to measurable results. A decade of research and evaluation studies, as well as large-scale, rigorously conducted meta analyses, indicate that young people who participate in after-school programs benefit in terms of academic performance, social and emotional learning, prevention, and health and wellness. They have improved school attendance; higher graduation rates; lower dropout rates; stronger academic performance; and improved positive behaviors, work habits, and persistence.

What is the role of Every Hour Counts?

Every Hour Counts, formerly the Coalition for Building After-School Systems (CBASS), is a leading voice in promoting the work of building expanded-learning systems.

Its work includes convening key stakeholders, disseminating information about best practices, developing shared metrics for quality and accountability, and influencing policy. Every Hour Counts:

- Supports a community of practice by sharing promising practices and engaging in knowledge-sharing activities.



- Is developing a Measurement Framework that describes common measures for outcomes at the youth, program, and system levels. This framework will provide a blueprint for coordinated accountability and improvement, so quality practices lead to measurable, improved outcomes for students.
- Leads demonstration projects that test the feasibility of policy and practice concepts, and disseminates findings and tools for replication.
- Serves as a clearinghouse of information about expanded-learning systems.
- Convenes stakeholders to share knowledge and ideas.
- Advocates for policy change.
- Provides local, customized technical assistance. Every Hour Counts led citywide planning processes to build expanded-learning systems in Chester, PA; New Orleans, LA; and Racine, WI.

The Every Hour Counts coalition represents longstanding partnerships with more than 1,400 schools, districts, and community-based organizations that provide quality after-school and summer programming. Every Hour Counts partners support initiatives that reach 240,000 students each year.

What can individuals and organizations do to support expanded learning?

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.

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- 2 Afterschool Alliance. (2009). *America after 3pm: Key findings*. Retrieved from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM_Key_Findings_2009.pdf.
- 3 Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. J. (2012). Introduction. In Duncan, G. J., & Murnane, R. J. (Eds.), *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children's Life Chances* (pp. 3-27). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. [See Figure 1.6]. Retrieved from Russell Sage Foundation. <http://www.russellsage.org/node/4036>.
- 4 Katz, C. (2004). Afterschool programs a top municipal priority, survey finds. *Nation's Cities Weekly* 27(20).