



every
hour
counts
expanding learning so
every student can thrive

Expanded-Learning Systems in Action

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Building School-Community Partnerships

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

Many Every Hour Counts cities have school-community partnerships with vibrant relationships that are models for any urban area rethinking its approach to enrichment opportunities.

At PS 188 in Manhattan, **ExpandedED Schools by TASC** has joined with the school's leadership to redefine how learning is delivered. Teachers, teaching artists, AmeriCorps members, and other community educators work together to plan and deliver lesson plans 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 principal keeps all of the educators on the same page, and the students benefit from seeing the material in a new way.

As part of its Community and School Engagement Strategy, 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. For example, the Family League hopes to reduce chronic absenteeism by 25 percent in two years, in part, by training community groups to meet parents in the neighborhoods where the problem is strongest. Students in the University of Maryland School of Social Work made home visits to families whose children have poor attendance or have been suspended. Child First Authority canvassed neighborhoods toward the end of summer to make sure kids were ready for school and to identify families who needed support.



An expanded-learning system engages students in high-quality learning and enrichment through after-school, summer, and other initiatives. 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.

Boston After School & Beyond



In California, the **Partnership for Children & Youth** collaborates with the state superintendent and a range of players — school districts, educators, school boards, education leaders, mayors, legislators, nonprofits, funders, civic leaders, and parents — in the Summer Matters campaign, a statewide initiative to expand and improve summer learning across the state. Through the campaign, 12 model programs provide four to six weeks of activities aimed at engaging students, building their skills, and introducing them to new ideas and activities.

Each of the Summer Matters model programs has a different focus based on local needs and interests. In Fresno, for example, program activities are organized around the characters, themes, and adventures in a popular young adult book series, such as *The Hunger Games*. In Sacramento, the district's youth development office engaged middle school students in designing service-learning projects focused on challenges they identified in their own communities. While each program is different, they have the same positive outcomes: Summer Matters programs are demonstrating measurable positive impacts on grade-level vocabulary, work habits, and strengthening connections to peers and adults.

In Boston, 700 organizations offer 1,700 after-school and summer programs. The initiatives help students develop skills that are essential for school and life, such as critical thinking, communication, respect, and perseverance. Led by **Boston After School & Beyond**, school, community, and municipal leaders have worked together to set goals, build an online directory to catalog their many learning opportunities, document lessons-learned, and find consistent venues to coordinate on strategies. To demonstrate that these programs makes a difference, the city worked with community groups to develop a K-12 citywide results framework.

Providence's AfterZone uses a collaborative teaching model to show middle school students that what they learn in the classroom is relevant to their life and career choices. Roughly 60 community educators from organizations such as Save the Bay and institutions such as Rhode Island College partner with teachers to deliver hands-on activities that address academics as well as teamwork and problem solving. The **Providence After School Alliance**, which developed the AfterZone, works closely with the school district to provide a seamless day of learning.

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. For example, **Boston After School & Beyond** collaborated with Boston Public Schools, the mayor's office, and other stakeholders to develop a shared vision for after-school programs: the Achieve, Connect, Thrive (ACT) paradigm.

Building on more than a decade of investment in after-school programming, youth-development leaders in Boston 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.

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The ACT approach gives community organizations a tool they can apply in many different ways. For instance, Boston After School & Beyond and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative used the concept for a pilot program that gave 40 teens practical work experience in the summer of 2012. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, based in the Roxbury and North Dorchester neighborhoods, focuses youth on improving their community with concrete projects, such as community gardens or art space. Before the teens' summer work began, they completed a self-assessment about their strengths and areas needing improvement. Using the results, teens chose a skill to foster, such as planning or staying focused. The process gave them a new vocabulary about skill building, new insights into themselves, and tangible ways to translate their goals into action.

In another 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. The organization also targeted English language learners to give them greater opportunities to improve their speaking and literacy skills. Some of the students saw the programming as summer camp — focused on fun — and the teachers who participated realized they could incorporate this activity-based learning approach into their traditional curriculum.

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 communitywide 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

A results-oriented intermediary drives development of an expanded-learning system by setting standards, developing relationships, and identifying meaningful ways to measure results. This multifaceted work is demonstrated by the **Providence After School Alliance (PASA)**, the intermediary that led development of the highly successful AfterZone, which provides citywide after-school and summer programming to middle school students in Providence, RI.

The hallmark of the AfterZone is its educators. The initiative taps the combined expertise of two groups: the community, through organizations and individuals committed to providing high-quality educational opportunities outside the school day; and educators from the school district, who are eager to find more time for hands-on, inquiry-based teaching.

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

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math and meteorology, to solar-powered go-kart construction, which introduces them to green engineering and mechanics. All programs are led by community educators with expertise in relevant professional fields.

The AfterZone Summer Scholars program pairs public school teachers with community educators who specialize in experiential, inquiry-based learning in subjects from art to urban ecology. These teams co-develop and co-teach a collaborative curriculum that connects STEM content and applied critical-thinking skills with hands-on field research.

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.

PASA holds its programs to rigorous standards to ensure that they have high-quality content, shared goals, and, most important, measurable results. Using the validated Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), PASA assesses instructional quality and provides coaching, progress reports, and other assistance to educators. Recently, the group adopted the Survey of After School Youth Outcomes (SAYO), a trusted assessment tool that examines the experience and development of students from the perspectives of teachers, staff, and the students themselves. The SAYO complements the YPQA and gives PASA a holistic view of the student experience as well as an understanding of the program's impact on social and emotional learning.

The value of a high-quality intermediary — and a commitment to continuous improvement — can be seen in the data: In Providence, independent evaluators 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.

Teachers also reported personal gains from their participation in the Summer Scholars. Why? PASA found that they were excited about the opportunity to teach in a collaborative, inquiry-based environment. Moreover, the AfterZone's less-traditional format ignited sparks of interest in both teachers and students, allowing them to make more personal connections during both the summer program and the following school year.

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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.



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