California Expanded Learning

EQUITY SCREEN

Considerations for an Equitable Recovery for the Expanded Learning Workforce

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Expanded Learning in California

California boasts the largest and highest rated Expanded Learning (EXL) infrastructure in the nation. EXL programs in California support after school, summer, intersession, and before school programs at over 4,500 sites serving over 980,000 children and youth annually. In 2019-2020, approximately $650 million in new and continued grants were allocated to After School Education and Safety (ASES) Programs and $148 million in grants were allocated to 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Programs. Since 2007, the California Department of Education (CDE) has built an effective System of Support for Expanded Learning (SSEL) infrastructure to support its EXL grantees, and has established a strong culture of collaboration between the CDE and the EXL field.

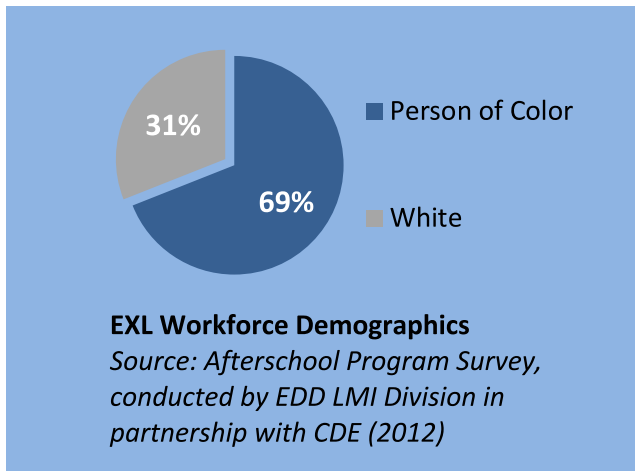## Expanded Learning Workforce and COVID-19 Advisory Group

Building upon the *Recommendations for the Development of a Diverse and Thriving Expanded Learning Workforce* developed by the EXL Workforce Strategy Committee in 2019, over 40 stakeholders responded to a survey and convened twice for two-hour meetings in May 2020 and June 2020 to rapidly identify the workforce challenges in this COVID-19 moment and inform solutions that center low-income workers and workers of color.

Centering Racial Equity in the Impact of COVID-19

Communities of color and low-income communities—the very same communities that make-up a large percentage of the EXL Workforce—are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. PolicyLink reports that people of color are more likely to be frontline or essential workers and more likely to be uninsured. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reports that Latino and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander groups have a disproportionate share of cases. California adults who are African American, Latino, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander have disproportionately more deaths. The proportion of COVID-19 deaths in African Americans is about double their population representation. The CDPH elevates the impact of structural racism and poverty as contributors to this disparity.

As such, PolicyLink emphasizes the need for recovery efforts that include the following principles:

- Deliberately plan for the most vulnerable.

- Solve for the issues facing low-income communities and communities of color.

- Implement race-conscious approaches to counter persistent inequities.

EXL Workforce Demographics
Source: Afterschool Program Survey, conducted by EDD LMI Division in partnership with CDE (2012)

The EXL Workforce is largely made-up of people of color, in part-time employment with limited to no benefits. As a result, it is imperative that the needs of the EXL Workforce are addressed while they carry out this essential work supporting communities most negatively impacted by COVID-19.

Applying an Equity Lens in Recovery Efforts

To ensure the EXL field advances equity- and justice-centered recovery strategies, an equity screen has been developed. A strategy screen is a tool used to inform strategic decision making. In this case, the screen has an emphasis on elevating equity in decision making and strategy development. The tool is intended to support the Expanded Learning Division (EXLD) of the CDE, technical assistance (TA) providers, program providers, district leadership; and policymakers with ensuring solutions that are explored best meet the needs of employees most negatively impacted by COVID-19. The equity screen consists of questions that are designed to guide the development of solutions in several areas:

- **State level policy, funding, and advocacy**

- **Staff retention and school day alignment**

- **Emotional and physical needs of staff**

- **Basic needs of staff**

- **Professional development, training, skills, and competencies**

While these questions are focused on the EXL Workforce, members of the EXL Workforce and COVID-19 Advisory Group (see member list at the bottom of this document) also elevated the need for a similar screen to apply in their work with children, youth, and families.

To learn more about this tool, visit www.afterschoolnetwork.org/expanded-learning-workforce-and-covid-19-advisory-group.

Overarching Equity Considerations

The following questions should be considered in any decision related to policies and programming that impact the EXL Workforce:

1. Are the voices of staff, students and families driving solutions? Are they all at the decision-making tables, especially with lead education agencies?

2. From the perspective of grantees statewide, what does the CDE need to pay particular attention to regarding its policies on the delivery of EXL services?

3. How might decisions be more responsive to diverse needs of communities? Are the needs of staff of color and low-income staff an explicit priority?

4. Are decisions focused on addressing systems of oppression?

5. Are decisions ensuring state and local EXL policy does not exacerbate disparities faced by staff of color and low-income staff (i.e., wage/pay, health, education, advancement)?

6. Are decisions responsive to a staff team that is almost entirely people of color?

7. Are local programming decisions considering how they are giving priority to those in most need, or people with privilege?

State Level Policy, Funding, and Advocacy

The COVID-19 Workforce Advisory Group determined that EXL providers need continued direction and guidance from the CDE on grant requirements, legislation, and education code changes that impact them. Senate Bill 98 provided much needed flexibility, allowing EXL providers to continue to support youth and families, partner with the instructional day, and keep EXL staff employed. The EXLD has created and made available resources and guidance to the field including the Role of Expanded Learning Programs During the COVID-19 Crisis, Senate Bill 98 Guidance, and COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions 2020–21. Ongoing, there may be a need for additional policy to ensure EXL programs and staff are best set up to support the state's recovery. EXL is providing an essential service to families most in need, and like child care, will be critical in helping people get back to work. Promoting that message nationally, statewide, and locally will help ensure that EXL is "at the table" as partners alongside school district and site administrators to design and implement effective programming now and in the future. The following questions should be considered when developing workforce related policy, or to examine the impact of workforce related policy:

1. How am I/are we ensuring the policy stance is explicit about EXL being a solution to equity and social justice issues faced by our workforce, children, and families?

2. How am I/are we ensuring state and local EXL policy do not exacerbate disparities faced by staff of color and low-income staff?

3. How do I/we ensure that cost benefit analysis on the impact of ASES includes the workforce and the racial and economic makeup of employees?

4. How is local and state policy/advocacy strategy addressing funding for living wages and benefits? Funding physical and emotional safety for staff? Funding for professional development?

5. Does the blueprint for organizing staff, students, and families in support of ASES funding at state and local levels elevate an equity agenda?

6. How am I/are we engaging legislative caucuses and social justice organizations that represent people of color and low-income communities engaged in the policy/advocacy strategy?

7. How do I/we encourage and equip staff with the skills to engage and lead campaigns to influence local, state, and federal policy?

8. How do I/we engage relevantly and directly to people of color and low-income staff?

9. Are surveys in all languages provided to staff when gathering data?

Staff Retention and School Day Partnership

Pre-COVID-19, many EXL providers already faced recruitment and retention challenges. As various program structures emerge, consideration of how potential structures impact the job functions of EXL positions, and thus the existing and potential workforce, is needed. More virtual and distance learning environments could result in fewer returning staff, while some staff may not be able to provide physical programming but could utilize their skills in other areas. College-enrolled EXL staff may have left the area since classes are offered virtually, while contact with others may have been lost during shelter-in-place and remote work transitions. Attention to the overall job market and job recovery efforts will be necessary, if some parents and caregivers remain in teleworking conditions, fewer EXL positions may be needed. EXL must be in lockstep with school districts and sites in assessing staffing needs in alignment with school and EXL program structures to ensure that EXL jobs remain viable and protected.

The following questions should be considered when developing programming structures and decisions in coordination with school-day partners:

1. How do I/we ensure flexible use of funding guidelines do not inadvertently reduce or eliminate funding or need for EXL programs?

2. How do I/we assess working hours to address the need for more stable and consistent employment?

3. How do I/we assess how occupations and positions might change due to COVID-19, including reassessment of pay and benefits?

4. How do I/we ensure all staff, especially frontline staff, have sufficient liability coverage (to cover increased health risks related to COVID-19)?

5. How do I/we ensure professional development will be recognized or incentivized, including being paid to complete training within work hours?

6. How do I/we support the district or local educational agencies with partnering with community based organizations (CBOs), unions, etc.?

7. How do I/we provide management and/or site coordinators with the tools and skills needed to navigate relationships with partners that hold greater positional power?

8. How have I/we considered the elevated health risks faced by frontline staff, who are largely people of color and low-income, in our decision to offer in-person programming?

9. Have I/we identified the conditions needed to offer in-person programming that upholds the physical and emotional safety of staff?

10. Have I/we considered if virtual-only programming is needed until there is a vaccine as a solution to ensuring the safety of staff?

11. How do I/we hire and retain staff in all positional levels within the organization who represent the children and families served?

12. Are the needs of students and staff driving the training and professional development content versus the expectations of school day and/or funders?

13. How do I/we ensure that staff have an understanding of race, class, power, privilege, and oppression?

Staff Emotional and Physical Safety

Ibram X. Kendi describes the nation in the [midst of two crises](#): "a racial pandemic within the viral pandemic-older than 1896, but as new as COVID-19, and the murder of George Floyd." Like youth and families, EXL staff may be experiencing overwhelming anxiety, stress, feelings of isolation; "survivor's guilt", and other traumas. Research has shown that educators may experience [vicarious trauma](#) resulting from hearing youths' "trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured." Some educators are themselves dealing with the lasting effects of trauma resulting from [adverse childhood](#)

experiences (ACEs), and more recent trauma as dual pandemics disproportionately impact African American, Indigenous, and people of color. At the same time, for EXL staff returning to physical programming, the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 may cause stress and anxiety about returning to work. Strict and ever-changing physical safety protocols are still being called for, while personal protective equipment may be difficult to access. Finally, the increased use of technology makes way for privacy or other legal issues that EXL staff may not be equipped to safeguard against.

The following questions should be considered when developing workforce processes and decisions that recognize the emotional and physical safety of staff:

1. How do I/we support staff with accessing no/low-cost mental health support?

2. How do I/we ensure staff have access to an ombudsperson within their agency to process interactions with their colleagues and supervisors?

3. How do I/we encourage and support difficult conversations about race in a safe, confidential, and private space?

4. How do I/we support the mental and emotional wellness of staff, especially staff of color? Of low-income staff?

5. How do I/we ensure staff are aware of how trauma and ACEs impact adult learning and comprehension?

6. How do I/we support the needs of trans staff of color?

7. Do COVID-19 guidelines help address fears of returning to programs and schools?

8. How do I/we protect the physical safety of site-based staff, who are largely staff of color and low-income?

9. How do I/we ensure all staff, especially frontline staff, have sufficient liability coverage (to cover increased health risks)?

10. How do I/we consider language, cultural identity, race, education, and other identities when planning meetings and communicating with staff?

11. Do I/we provide training to prevent staff from misidentifying indicia of poverty as neglect/abuse?

12. How do I/we ensure virtual trainings are mindful of how post traumatic stress disorder impacts adult learning and comprehension?

13. How have I/we considered the elevated health risks faced by frontline staff, who are largely people of color and low-income, in our decision to offer in-person programming?

14. Have I/we identified the conditions needed to offer in-person programming that upholds the physical and emotional safety of staff?

15. Have I/we considered if virtual-only programming is needed until there is a vaccine as a solution to ensuring the safety of staff?

Basic Needs of Staff

Like youth and families, EXL staff may be experiencing increased hardships in securing their own basic needs including child care, housing, food security, stable internet, adequate technology devices; stable hours and income, healthcare, and home care for other residents in the home. Some staff may be wondering if and how they will complete post-secondary education, or how their or their families' immigration status might affect their ability to access available resources. As schools reopen and physical EXL programming begins, staff may seek more or additional support for ensuring their basic needs are met. EXL providers must consider how to respond if EXL staff run out of paid sick leave, and anticipate potential staffing shortages due to EXL staff taking sick leave. By assessing the basic needs of staff, and then providing direct and indirect supports to meet those needs, EXL providers can help to ensure those that are serving the children and youth most in need are also adequately equipped to do so.

The following questions should be considered to ensure the basic needs of staff are met:

1. How do I/we involve frontline staff in informing the development of basic needs policies and ways to help staff access resources?

2. How do I/we support staff with accessing no/low-cost child care resources for their children?

3. How do I/we support staff with accessing no/low-cost health care for themselves and their families?

4. What additional efforts are in place to ensure low-income staff are aware of basic needs services available?

5. How do I/we ensure access to basic needs resources is confidential?

6. How do I/we ensure the framing of accessing basic needs resources is not deficit based?

7. How do I/we prevent staff from being reprimanded when struggling to get their basic needs met?

8. How do I/we ensure wage/pay equity is a part of our agency policies?

9. How do I/we ensure wage/pay equity is part of policy and advocacy efforts?

Professional Development, Training, Skills, and Competencies

EXL must be prepared to both deal with the way programs will be restructured operationally, including but not limited to: extended hours, strict safety guidelines, and evolving reopening plans. Staff also need to be equipped with specific skills and competencies to respond to the social emotional needs of children, youth, and their families. While many EXL providers and staff quickly moved to emergency response teaching and learning, shifting to true distance learning will also require additional training and development.

Quality Standards for EXL can be aligned with training and best practices for distance learning and safety protocols. Statewide, exploration of how the EXL TA ecosystem supports this transition through collaboration and shared learning is needed. Locally, providers are needing affordable, interactive platforms for small groups. A strong emphasis on social emotional learning, trauma informed learning; and health and wellness supports for families, youth, and staff was identified. Finally, there is a renewed call for incentivizing staff to both return to work to retain the workforce; as well as recognizing professional development, training, and experience with equitable salary schedules.

The following questions should be considered when developing workforce processes and decisions related to training and skills development of staff:

1. How do I/we provide that all staff have access to effective technology tools (i.e., computer, video, audio, software, internet)?

2. How do I/we provide staff with training on designing and facilitating effective virtual learning, including the use of technology required and virtual facilitation skills?

3. Do I/we provide professional development on different days of the week and times of the day?

4. How do I/we ensure professional development will be recognized or incentivized, including being paid to complete training within work hours?

5. Are the needs of students and staff driving the training and professional development content versus the expectations of school day and/or funders?

6. How do I/we ensure that staff designing and facilitating professional development have an understanding of race, class, power, privilege, and oppression?

7. How do I/we ensure that the staff charged with the design and facilitation of trainings is reflective of the staff that will participate in the trainings?

8. How do I/we ensure that staff of color are designing and facilitating training and other professional development supports?

9. How do I/we ensure a sense of safety and inclusivity within virtual learning opportunities?

10. Do I/we provide training to prevent staff from misidentifying indicia of poverty as neglect/abuse?

11. How do I/we ensure that virtual trainings are mindful of how trauma and ACEs impacts adult learning and comprehension?

12. How do I/we equip staff to encourage and support difficult conversations about race with staff, youth, and families?

13. How do I/we make racial equity, cultural competency, and social justice training, and capacity building available to staff?

14. How do I/we ensure that staff of color are provided peer support, mentorship, and coaching?

15. How do I/we ensure there are opportunities for peer support, mentorship, and coaching that allow for ongoing reflection on equity and social justice practices?

16. How do I/we ensure that racial equity and cultural competency is infused within supervision systems across the organization?

Key Definitions:

Expanded Learning (EXL) refers to before and after school, summer, and intersession learning experiences; that develop the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs and interests of students. EXL opportunities should be hands on, engaging, student centered, results driven; involve community partners, and complement learning activities the regular school day/year.

The **EXLD** is the California Department of Education's Expanded Learning Division.

The **System of Support for Expanded Learning (SSEL)** is the regional and statewide structure designed to build the capacity of Expanded Learning programs to meet all grant requirements defined in California statute and to promote high quality programs and services. The SSEL consists of EXLD staff, designated county leads/staff, and contracted TA providers.

The equity screen was informed by representatives from EXL programs throughout California as well as various stakeholder groups including: the SSEL members, EXL TA providers, CBOs, and higher education, as denoted with an asterisk in the list below:

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Ana Campos, After School All Stars
Jennifer Cisneros, Santa Ana Unified School District
Gabriela Delgado, San Diego County Office of Education
Jen Dietrich, Partnership for Children & Youth
Natalie Dodson, The California Teacher Fellows Foundation
John Duran, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
Ava Elliott, Public Profit
Bill Fennessy, Think Together
Steven Fowler, FowlerHoffman LLC
Elizabeth Garcia, MIT Academy
Michelle Giroux, Romoland School District
Bessie Glossenger, Mendocino County Office of Education
Bea Gonzalez, Coachella Valley Unified School District
Monica Gonzalez-Williams, Sacramento County Office of Education
Maya Hernandez, Hayward Unified School District/Youth Enrichment Program
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Melea Meyer, Mendocino County Office of Education
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Marisa Ramirez, Bay Area Community Resources
Sharon Ramos, Boys & Girls Clubs of Carson
Vincent Record, San Jacinto Unified School District
Stephanie Roberts, Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Aleah Rosario, Foundation for California Community Colleges* (Chair)
Shannon Roth, Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center. Inc
Celina Salinas, Woodcraft Rangers
Troy Selvey, California AfterSchool Network
Helena Silva, The Office of the Fresno County Superintendent Schools
Brent Smither, The Office of the Fresno County Superintendent Schools
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*members that supported the development of the equity screen

To learn more about this tool, visit
www.afterschoolnetwork.org/expanded-learning-workforce-and-covid-19-advisory-group.

The CDE EXLD partnered with the Foundation for California Community Colleges Workforce Development Department to provide coordination and strategic advising to Expanded Learning Workforce strategy development.