Expanded Learning in California
Grantee Orientation Video
Continuous Quality Improvement
Audio Transcript

Hello and welcome to the Expanded Learning in California Grantee Orientation video on the Continuous Quality improvement, or "CQI", brought to you by the California Department of Education Expanded Learning Division and The California Afterschool Network.

This video will examine Expanded Learning program requirements to implement a Continuous Quality Improvement process.

By the end of this video you will:
Gain an understanding of the context for CQI in California's expanded learning programs.
Learn how to meet program requirements to implement a CQI process.
Learn how to create a site level CQI plan.
And Learn about a planning tool that you can use in the creation of your site level CQI plan.

Let's begin by providing some context for data driven continuous quality improvement.
On the screen you will see a timeline of the California Department of Education's field informed vision for expanded learning and strategic plan.
In September 2014, the CDE adopted field-informed Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California.
In that same month, Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 1221 into law.

SB 1221 established a transportation grant for extreme rural or frontier sites and a minimum grant amount for small rural schools, who would not meet the capacity requirements otherwise.

In addition, SB 1221 created a new requirement for California expanded learning programs to implement a continuous quality improvement process based on the departments guidance on the quality standards.

After SB 1221 was signed into law by Governor Brown, it was codified in education code as Education Code 8484(a)(2) or EC 8484(a)(2) .

The language of EC 8484 (a)(2) states: "Programs shall provide evidence of a data-driven program quality improvement process that is based on departments guidance on program quality standards."

On the screen now you will see the necessary steps in order to meet these requirements.

Programs begin by submitting a commitment to engage in a program quality improvement process to the California Department of Education.

Programs then begin with their program assessment and data gathering to inform the creation of a site-level continuous quality improvement plan and then submit an annual outcome based data report each October.

While programs are not required to submit program improvement plans to CDE, in order to meet the requirement of engaging in a CQI process, grantees are asked to submit data regarding their CQI plans in an annual outcome based data report each October.
This data informs CDE:

What Quality Standard was identified for improvement?
What phase of the CQI was the program able to achieve?
And What stakeholders were involved in the CQI process?
As well as how has the CQI process helped improve program quality?

The information provided in the data report will let CDE know what sort of technical assistance and additional resources are needed for grantees to be successful in the CQI efforts.

Introducing the Quality Standards of Expanded Learning in California.

On the screen now is the cover of the Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California . The Quality Standards describe high levels of quality in expanded learning programs. They are a framework for success, and likely describe things you are already doing.

Why is CQI Important?

Researchers Durlak, Weisberg and Panchen outline the importance of intentionality and focusing on our desired outcomes. In their national review of 68 after school programs, serving school aged youth between the ages 5 and 18, they found that when programs implemented practices described by the acronym SAFE they saw significant academic and social improvements.
Improvements in:
Self Perceptions
School Bonding
Test Scores, Grades, and Attendance
Positive Social Behaviors
And Reductions in Drug Use

On your screen now you will see the SAFE features. These features are daily intentional actions that include:
A sequenced step by step approach.

Use of active forms of learning.
Focusing specific time on skill development.
And explicitly prioritizing desired skills.

So if you take a look at what the Safe Features are describing, at their core it's really daily intentional actions linked to a shared goal. So for example, if I know what I did yesterday is linked to what I'm doing today, is linked to what I'm doing tomorrow, and all those things are tied to a larger monthly or longer term program goal and I've allotted enough time in my daily lessons through out the week in order to actually achieve the objectives I've set forth in my plan; then I am practicing the level of intentionality that Durlak and Weisberg described and I'm more likely to achieve the positive results that their research has surfaced.

So what is CQI?

And the CQI process is nothing new and certainly not anything that the CDE made up. It's really a process that empowers practitioners to identify an area for growth, and through their daily practice, and through trial and error; really see what works at addressing a particular issue or achieving a particular goal.

On the screen now is an image of a Plan, Do, Study, Act or PDSA Cycle.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching uses the PDSA cycle to rapidly transform K-12 education, and this improvement strategy is very consistent with the CQI process, but they themselves did not innovate that process. They replicated the strategy from the medical model for improvement where PDSA cycles are used to improve the way that health care is delivered. So as you can see CQI is not a new concept.

The CQI Process

On the screen now you will see an image of the Continuous Quality Improvement Process.
The CQI Process consists of 3 steps: Assess, Plan and Improve.
The intention behind the process is to improve your program by identifying areas for improvement, creating a step by step improvement plan, and reviewing your plans effectiveness to improve on a continual basis.

The first step in the CQI Process is Assess.
In order to know how to improve your program you must first establish where your program is. This is done through collecting data about your program.
When collecting data, you want to create an assessment plan or process that includes a variety of tools or instruments, engages diverse stakeholders through multiple assessment strategies, and analyze and reflect on your results with multiple stakeholders.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of teaching describes three types of data:

Data for Accountability informs consequential decisions with pressure to focus on particular measures.
Data for Research is careful and deliberate; it generates conclusions that can impact practice.
Data for Improvement informs practice readily as stakeholders work toward a goal.
Although there are reporting requirements that programs must provide for accountability purposes, such as attendance numbers, the CQI process focuses mostly on data for improvement.

Data for research, or evaluation, is great data and information and it can inform our work. However, research or program evaluation data is a longer term process that informs the planning of a program but does not yield immediate results.
Programs can use this type of data in ongoing, quarterly reviews, or as part of an annual CQI process for the entire program.

Because the process of gathering data can often influence behavior, it is important to be absolutely clear about the purpose for the data collected, and what exactly it is used for. For example, we often hear from Program Directors that front line staff don't always openly share their challenges and struggles. They might think if they share truthful information about their programs quality, it may reflect negatively on their performance, or result in punitive action. This is because they might perceive they are providing data for accountability, as opposed to improvement.

The most important thing about collecting data for improvement is ensuring it is accurate. Therefore, creating an environment of support and trust, and being clear about the purpose of data collection, and even providing the opportunity for anonymous feedback is essential in the data gathering process.

The CQI process can really take place at a couple of different levels. When we talked about date for research or data for evaluation and how it can take a little bit longer to analyze and gather. Well, that's data that can be used at the programmatic level as part as an annual or on-going Continuous Quality Improvement Process for the program. On the other hand, program implementation everyday gives us data that we can use to improve our programs the next day. So the power of the CQI process and the power for rapid improvement is really at the site level.

On the screen now is an image highlighting the stakeholders that can provide input about Program Quality. Stakeholders that are important to gather data from in your continuous quality improvement process can include: youth workers, program managers and administrators, parents, youth, principals and teachers, and community partners.

Parents and youth are valuable resources to gather data from. But it is important when working with these stakeholders to consider the strategy and language we use to gather the data.

These stakeholders might not always understand the language and terminology that we may use as practitioners. And certainly, language that might be used in some of our assessment

instruments. Therefore, using an assessment tool with parents might not be the right strategy. Perhaps we could consider the top five things we want to know from parents, and how best gather data from them. Do we ask them to do a quick survey while they are picking up their children from program? Do we select a small group of engaged parents and do a focus group with facilitators that can address language gaps?

Similarly with students, what do we really want to know from them? And how can we ask them in a way that will get really good, quality data?
And gathering data from students doesn't need to be a complex process. In fact, I've heard of the strategy of putting a blank piece of paper in front of the students, and what you tell the students and say Look, I may or may not be able to create the program that you're going to describe or give the activities you want but at least now I know the authentic data of the program you would attend. This might be a more effective strategy than listing out the 10 activities that I think youth would want to participate in and asking them to check a box on a survey.

The second step in the CQI process is "Plan". After gathering and analyzing data, you will begin the creation of your site level program improvement plan.
After gathering and analyzing data you'll begin the creation of your site-level program improvement plan.

Three things that will help you during the planning phase are:
Include stakeholders and staff in the planning process.
Reflect on the data gathered, celebrate your successes and accomplishments, and use that data to determine one thing to improve on.
And also, make sure that that one thing contains a goal, objectives and activities.

CDE Guidance for Quality Improvement

On your screen now is a look at the actual California Department of Education's website. The website states:
Programs are encouraged to examine a variety of instruments and select the one that best suits their needs. They may also develop a tool of their own.
In addition, programs are not required to asses their performance on all twelve quality standards. In fact, it may be more effective to focus more on a few key areas; a suggested target of 1-3 each year. It is recommended for sites engaging in this process for the first time to only address one standard.

It is important to CDE that the CQI be a low-stakes for high impact process. They recognize that if your program is focused on improving multiple areas simultaneously it may not result in significant improvement in any single area. The CDE advises the program start with one Quality Standard area to work on at a time. Of course, some mature programs that have been practicing CQI for many years may choose more than one area to focus on for their improvement efforts.

It's a Process.

The work of expanded learning is important and we are always going to be working toward large scale goals. We're in this work because we want to ensure the children we work with learn the skills they will need to be successful in education, the world of work, and to be citizens in our democracy.

These are great goals, but we are not going to accomplish them in tomorrows three-hour program, or even by the end of the year. But what we can do is authentically look at where we are in relationship to our goal and take our first step on our stepladder to success.

Components of a CQI Plan

The California Department of Education has created a "Quality Improvement Plan" template for creating site-level improvement plans that can be accessed on both the CDE and CAN website. Programs are not required to use this template in implementing a CQI plan.
Improvement plans are created specifically for each site, and are kept on site for review and reflection. In addition, the improvement plan you initially create can be changed or adapted at any time to fit your needs.

The template includes:
The Quality Standard the program is working on.
The Improvement plan goal, objectives, activities, individuals responsible, important deadlines or dates and support or technical assistance needed to be successful.

Your CQI plan is going to contain 3 components: goals, objectives and activities.

Goals are broad, overarching and intentional targets pertaining to the quality standard individual sites commit to enhance. Something like, we want to create a culture of health and wellness in our program. This is going to be something that you are consistently striving for.

An objective is a specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound benchmark that will take you one step closer to achieving your goal. Something that can be characterized by the sentence by this time, a specific measurable outcome will occur. For example, by next semester, 75% of our students will participate in at least 3 physical activities per week.

An activity is a task or daily action that is designed and implemented to assist in the process of completing objectives. So for example, selecting a physical activity curriculum might be one activity you need to do in order to achieve your set objective.

On your screen now is an image that represents setting Targets Toward Achieving a Big Dot Goal". The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching outlines setting milestones in order for you to achieve your big dot goal, or program goal in this case.

The straight orange line in the image represents your plan and your objectives to achieve your goal. However, the wavy blue line is what actually happens as we implement our plan and attempt to reach our goal.

With every new step there will be unanticipated and unintended consequences we need to adapt to. These unintended consequences are data that we use to improve our program and adapt our plan to continue to move toward our goal.

In addition, if you feel that your plan is not working or it's a little off, it's ok to stop, re-evaluate and adapt your plan in order to move forward with your goal.

So the CQI process is really something that empowers the site-level practitioner to try things to improve their program and see what works and what doesn't. In this case, unintended consequences are considered data. You have heard the word "fail" expressed as first attempt in learning, and we really look at failure as data that we can actually use to continuously improve our practice and our process.

The third step in the CQI process is Improve. As part of the Improvement Process it is important that :
All levels of staff, including or perhaps especially site-level staff, are actively engaged in the improvement process.
All levels of site personnel should understand the larger program priorities, the content of their site level CQI plan, and have an understanding of how the activities they are implementing are supportive of both.
Adaptation is important. It's important to consistently review progressed towards objectives and make adjustments when needed.
It is also important to document and reflect on impact. We should always be looking at the positive impacts of the objectives that were met and always remember to celebrate those impacts.
Finally reflect on what you've learned through the process and how those lessons can inform future improvement efforts.

Take a moment to consider how you might have gotten better at something in your own life. Have you ever learned to play a musical instrument, ride a bike, bake, fix your vehicle? What did it take to get better at those things? Chances are, you did some blend of the following things.

You looked at where you were and where you wanted to go.
You set a goal, you created a plan.
You had benchmarks that would let you know when you were improving.
You learned from others that were more experienced than you.
You practiced and you made a lot of mistakes.
You reflected on and learned from those mistakes, and modified your behavior accordingly.

You adapted.
This is the hard work of improving your program's quality.

So California's commitment to quality through the CQI process is really ensuring that our children have the best high quality opportunities that we can give them, they deserve best. Our very best. But the CQI does not have to be intimidating for you, it's a matter of just being reflective and thinking about what you can do to make your program a little bit better. It's that intentionality behind the reflection and it can be done with knowing the fact that if you give it your best effort there is really no way to fail because we don't come to grade these plan, we don't come to judge you on how well you did the plan. What we're concerned is that you and your team at your school work together to really think through a process of how we can make our process just a little bit better. That's really all it is and by doing so intentionally you can't fail. So I just want to take a second and close by saying Thank you. Thank you for you, your staff, for all you do to serve the children, and families, and the school in your community.

This video is one of four videos providing information regarding program requirements and expectations.
Other Expanded Learning in California topics that you can access include Grants 101, Federal Program Monitoring, and Quality Standards for Expanded Learning.

Thank you for watching. This video has brought to you by The California Department of Education Expanded Learning Division and the California After School Network.

We would like to give a special Thank you to the schools and regional professionals listed on the screen for their assistance in the creation of these videos.