California's Expanded Learning Workforce

STATE OF THE STATE OF EXPANDED LEARNING IN CALIFORNIA BRIEF

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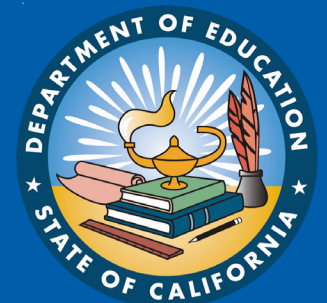**Jeff Davis** - Executive Director, California AfterSchool Network

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California's Expanded Learning Workforce

California's Expanded Learning Workforce serves a large number of California's most vulnerable students through Expanded Learning Programs[1].

California's Expanded Learning workforce provides critical opportunities to children and youth grounded in Positive Youth Development and the Science of Learning and Development, supporting their social, emotional, and physical development and well being[2]. The important role of these programs and the workforce that supports them was further elevated during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic[3]. Programs across the state became community hubs providing food, safe places to learn, and resources for the communities that they served.

Recognizing the impact of these programs, California's Governor and Legislature have committed unprecedented funding to drastically increase access to Expanded Learning for Transitional Kindergarten/Universal Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade students in the state, resulting in rapid growth of the Expanded Learning workforce. This includes the one time Expanded Learning Opportunities Grant (ELO-G) funded at $4.6 billion with COVID relief funds and the newly established Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P)[a] with ongoing apportionments to LEAs currently funded at $4 billion and anticipated to grow to $5 billion by full implementation.

For many years California's children, youth, and families have benefitted from a talented and diverse Expanded Learning workforce. California's Expanded Learning programs also faced recruitment and retention challenges long before the COVID-19 pandemic, a national labor shortage, and the rapid growth in demand for the Expanded Learning workforce resulting from the implementation of ELO-P. This has led to creative efforts and strategies that organizations and school districts across California have implemented.

In FY 18–19 there were 4,561 Expanded Learning programs in California that served over 980,000 children and youth[4]. Currently, California has 3 funding streams dedicated to on-going support of Expanded Learning programs including the After School Education and Safety (ASES) program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, and the recently established Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P).

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) such as School Districts and Charter Schools are the primary recipients of Expanded Learning apportionments and grants. Many LEAs implement their Expanded Learning programs in partnership with local Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

Expanded Learning in California

"Expanded Learning" means before school, after school, summer, or intersession learning programs that focus on developing the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs and interests of pupils through hands-on, engaging learning experiences. It is the intent of the Legislature that expanded learning programs are pupil-centered, results driven, include community partners, and complement, but do not replicate, learning activities in the regular school day and school year[5].

The Expanded Learning workforce—a diverse group of skilled practitioners—are sometimes referred to as Youth Development Workers, Youth Workers, or Community Educators. Staff in the Expanded Learning workforce hold similar roles but their titles may vary (e.g., Program Staff, Program Leader, Tutor, etc.) across agencies and settings.

Figure 1. California's Expanded Learning Workforce

The numbers shown in this figure are estimates before ELO-G and implementation.

70% are people of color

65% are women

78% live in the community they serve
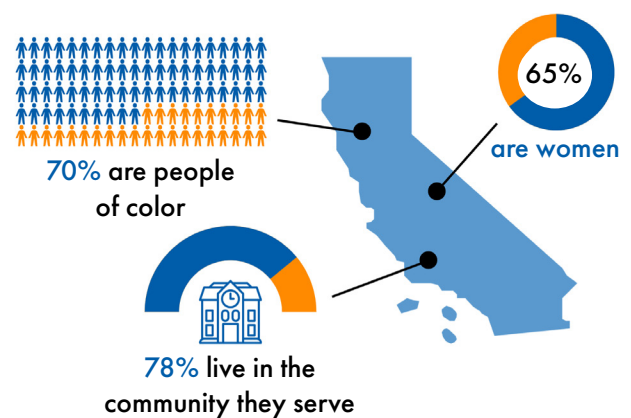
One of the most critical roles on any Expanded Learning site is the role of the Site Coordinator, or Site Lead. Site Coordinators work on staff development and supervision, ensure programs have materials they need within a budget, and work as liaisons with Principals, Teachers, and families. Program Leaders work directly with children and youth implementing curriculum and programming.

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the advent of the ELO-P, it was estimated that there were more than 30,000 Youth Development Workers in the Expanded Learning Field[6]. These workers are predominantly women and people of color, demographically representing the communities they serve[7].

Youth Development Workers implement programs consistent with the Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California and gather data from interest holders such as students, families, community partners, and school staff to inform a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process.

This brief provides an overview of the Expanded Learning workforce and the opportunity for multi-agency, multi-sector partnerships to expand and sustain this workforce. Such efforts will ultimately increase program quality, creating conditions for California's children and youth to thrive.

Barriers

The Expanded Learning Field has long faced many challenges to sustaining a high-quality workforce.

California's Expanded Learning programs have struggled with recruitment and retention of Youth Development Workers. Youth Development Workers often have few opportunities for upward career mobility and inadequate wages, leading to high turnover. The pandemic has exacerbated this need and is a trend experienced nationally across multiple sectors[8].
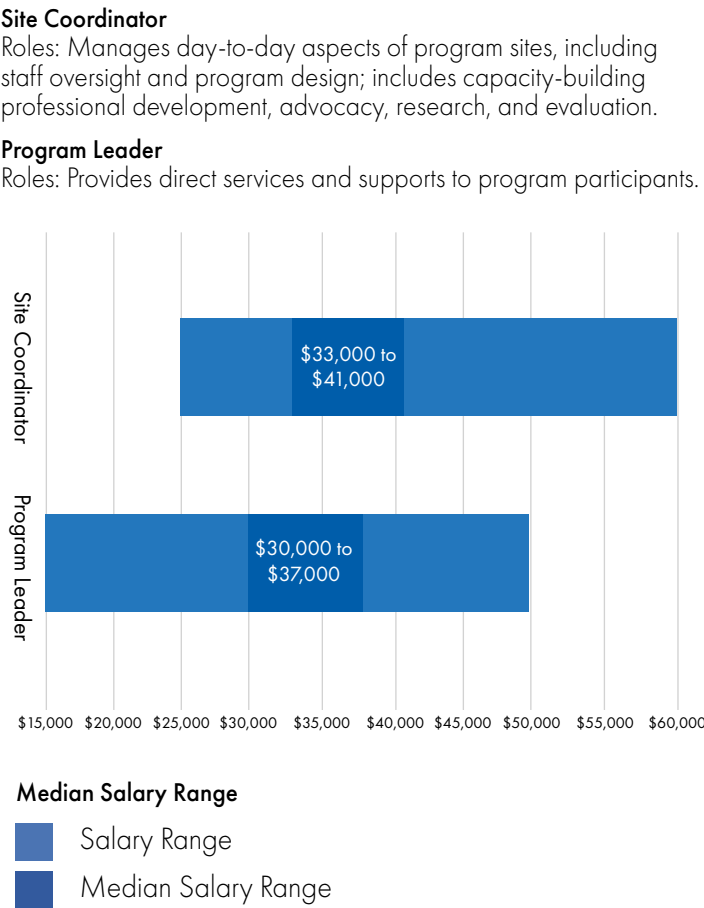
Inadequate Wages

A recent job posting analysis conducted by the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research[b] surfaced that between March 2020 to March 2021 the median annual salary for Site Coordinators was between $33,000–$41,000 and the median salary for Program Leaders was between $30,000–$37,000 (See Figure 2). This income level is not considered a living wage especially in urban areas of the state where the cost of living is high. The living wage is defined as the income required to cover basic family needs without reliance on outside assistance[9]. In San Francisco, a single person household without dependents must make approximately $64,000 to have a living wage[10], in San Diego $47,000[11], in Los Angeles County $45,000[12], in Sacramento $40,000[13], and in Fresno $36,000[14].

Figure 2. Role and Wage Comparisons

Site Coordinator
Roles: Manages day-to-day aspects of program sites, including staff oversight and program design; includes capacity-building professional development, advocacy, research, and evaluation.

Program Leader
Roles: Provides direct services and supports to program participants.

Median Salary Range
- Salary Range
- Median Salary Range

While the role of the Expanded Learning workforce is critical to schools, families, and communities, lack of access to adequate wages remains a persistent barrier for Youth Development Workers to stay in the Expanded Learning field. These challenges are compounded with limited access to full time positions with adequate benefits packages, further limiting the pool of potential candidates.

Unprecedented Demand

California has made historic one-time and ongoing investments in schools, Expanded Learning, Child Care, Community schools, mental health, substance use prevention/intervention, and other human service sectors. In 2021 Governor Gavin Newsom and the Legislature established the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) ensuring every district in California that serves students in-person in grades TK–6 has funding to provide Expanded Learning programs to their students. In FY 23–24 the ELO-P was funded at $4 Billion. This investment is in addition to the approximately $900 million in FY 23–24 funding through ASES and 21st CCLC, drastically increasing the need for Youth Development Workers[15]. These new funds create opportunities for every TK–6 unduplicated pupil[C] in California to have access to an Expanded Learning program[16]. This expansion addresses critical needs for children, youth, families, and schools.

Data Gaps

Youth Development Workers are employed by Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in a non centralized system, making it extremely challenging to understand the breadth of the Expanded Learning workforce. While LEAs and CBOs understand the workforce supporting their programs, it is challenging to understand the characteristics of the Expanded Learning workforce more broadly. This is further compounded by the lack of a unique identifier in workforce classification systems such as a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code.

The lack of a standardized classification code makes it difficult to quantify the number of Youth Development Workers working in the Expanded Learning field in California and the country. A better understanding of the workforce can help Expanded Learning programs and Technical Assistance providers provide stronger supports and pathways for the workforce leading to increased staff retention and program quality.

Unclear Career Pathways

The most recent Site Coordinator survey conducted suggests that approximately 20% of Site Coordinators aspire to continue to grow within the Expanded Learning Field. Over 82% indicated that their employment in Expanded Learning was part of a larger career goal[17].

This is likely because there is no clear pathway to career growth beyond direct service as a Youth Development Worker and Site Leadership. The next level of leadership is to work in administration at a CBO or LEA, as a Regional Manager, or in a capacity building or Technical Assistance (TA) role (i.e. a member of the System of Support for Expanded Learning[d]). However, these jobs are often inaccessible and limited. Youth Development Workers are often unaware of positions that may be available or have not received enough coaching and mentorship to apply. Requirements of credentials and college degrees for certain positions can also be a barrier to career advancement for the Expanded Learning workforce. Youth Development Workers will often stay in their positions because of their passion to serve youth and children.

> *"I think I have stayed out of loyalty to humanity. I find the qualities of myself in students and remind myself each evening after a trying day that these young people are the future, and that it is worth fighting for."*
>
> ### Site Coordinator Survey Respondent

According to the most recent Site Coordinator survey data available, over 26% of Site Coordinators indicated that becoming a teacher or teaching was their goal. Site Coordinators indicated interest in other education-related careers including Education Administration (between 9%–11% across multiple survey years), and School Counseling (between 8%–11% across survey years). Site Coordinators also expressed career goals in Social Work (between 6%–8% across survey years) and Early Childhood Education (between 5%–6% across survey years).

As the Expanded Learning workforce continues to grow, it will be important to leverage this workforce and create clear educational and workforce pathways paired with capacity building and adequate compensation.

Possibilities
Sustaining the Expanded Learning Workforce

Leaders in California's Expanded Learning field have been working to create systemic solutions to address persistent workforce challenges for many years. In 2018, the California Department of Education's (CDE) Expanded Learning Division (EXLD) convened over 120 CDE staff and field stakeholders to identify goals and objectives for four outlined strategic initiative areas (Quality Programs, Policy and Grant Administration, Collaborative Partnerships, and Workforce)[18]. As a result, the Workforce Strategy Committee (WSC) was convened in 2019 to create recommendations on how to advance the goals developed by the field and included in California's Expanded Learning Strategic Plan 2.0.

The WSC concluded their work by recommending the formation of a new Committee to continue to advance the recommendations generated by the WSC. Thus, the CDE's Expanded Learning Division convened the Workforce Implementation Committee (WIC). The WIC convened a diverse group that included the CDE EXLD, County Leads from the SSEL, LEA program providers, CBO program providers, community colleges, and intermediary organizations. The WIC convened from 2020 to 2022 through the COVID-19 Pandemic and through California's historic investment in Expanded Learning through the ELO-P.

The WIC developed strategies and recommendations for the Expanded Learning field to create pathways into the Expanded Learning field, pathways within the Expanded Learning field, and pathways through the Expanded learning field into teaching, and other education and human service professions. These pathway efforts would provide a sustainable Expanded Learning workforce while also addressing other significant workforce needs. For example, developing pathways into the teaching profession would incentivize Youth Development Workers in the Expanded Learning field to remain in their positions for a period of time (resulting in continuity and increased program quality), while also serving to address California's Teacher Crisis, and diversifying California's Teacher workforce[19].
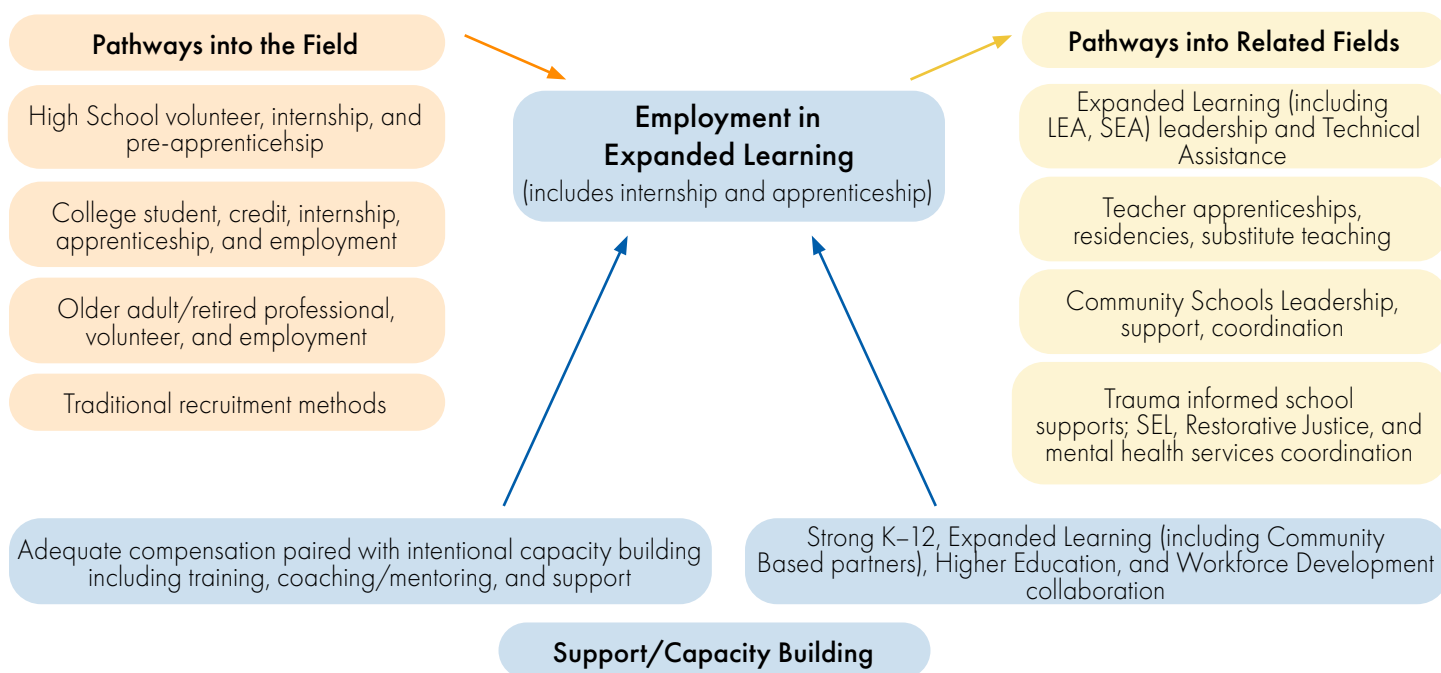
Figure 3. EXL Workforce Timeline

2012–2017
The first strategic planning process was launched in early 2012, resulting in *A Vision for Expanded Learning in California, Strategic Plan: 2014–2016.*

At the end of 2017, the EXLD conducted a thorough review of the *Strategic Plan 1.0*

2018
Fall 2018
EXLD convened over 120 stakeholders to identify goals and objectives for the outlined strategic initiatives, including the Workforce, resulting in a five-year *EXLD Strategic Plan 2.0.*

2019
April–December 2019
The Workforce Strategy Committee convened to advance the goals and activities set forth in the *EXLD Strategic Plan 2.0.*

2020
February 2020
A Vision for EXL in CA Report: Recommendations for the Development of a Diverse and Thriving EXL Workforce was submitted to the EXLD.

May–June 2020
EXL Workforce and COVID-19 Advisory Group convened and recommendations were provided to the EXLD.

October 2020
EXL Workforce Implementation Committee launched.

2021
Spring/Fall 2021
A workforce philosophy guides the EXLD and EXL ecosystem; EXL staff can enroll in an earn and learn program informed by the state workforce data.

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[c]A pupil enrolled in a school district or a charter school who is classified as an English learner, eligible for a free or reduced-price meal, or is a foster youth.
[d]The regional system of support for California is called the System of Support for Expanded Learning (SSEL). The SSEL consists of California Department of Education (CDE) staff, designated County Leads/Staff and contracted Technical Assistance (TA) Providers. Additionally, as part of the regional teams, the sixteen county office of educations (COEs) are funded to build the capacity of expanded learning programs (EXLPs) through peer network systems and other activities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math to promote quality programming.

Figure 4. Expanded Learning Pathways

Pathways into the Field

- High School volunteer, internship, and pre-apprenticehsip
- College student, credit, internship, apprenticeship, and employment
- Older adult/retired professional, volunteer, and employment
- Traditional recruitment methods

Employment in Expanded Learning
(includes internship and apprenticeship)

Pathways into Related Fields

- Expanded Learning (including LEA, SEA) leadership and Technical Assistance
- Teacher apprenticeships, residencies, substitute teaching
- Community Schools Leadership, support, coordination
- Trauma informed school supports; SEL, Restorative Justice, and mental health services coordination

Adequate compensation paired with intentional capacity building including training, coaching/mentoring, and support

Strong K–12, Expanded Learning (including Community Based partners), Higher Education, and Workforce Development collaboration

Support/Capacity Building

The WIC also surfaced that the competencies developed by Youth Development Workers in the Expanded Learning field are transferable to other growing fields such as Community School Coordination, Social Work, or Mental Health.

Recent efforts have explored and begun implementing pathways from Expanded Learning into teaching. One of the most prominent models is the California Teaching Fellows Foundation (CTFF, see box below). Additionally, CAN, engaged CTFF and the LA's BEST Expanded Learning program to explore the potential of Expanded Learning pathways into Teacher Residency programs.

One discovery that surfaced in this work is that the competencies necessary to be a successful Youth Development Worker are similar to the skills and competencies needed for teaching (See Figure 6). It is also clear that no one system can do this alone. Creating Expanded Learning pathways into the teaching profession will require strong partnerships between TK–12 Education, Higher Education, Expanded Learning, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and more.

The WIC also surfaced the opportunity for apprenticeship models that can support pathways into and throughout the Expanded Learning field. Apprenticeship models are desirable because they provide opportunities for financially compensated on-the-job training, waive educational costs, and are paired with strong capacity/competency building that enhance the skill set of the apprentice. Such apprenticeship models are becoming more common in early education but have not been integrated into Expanded Learning partnerships[21].

Pilot efforts are now under way that include a collaboration between Partnership for Children and Youth, The California AfterSchool Network, Berkeley City College, and Girls Inc. of Alameda County[22]. Such models also require strong collaboration across systems of education, Expanded Learning, Higher Education, Workforce Development, the Department of Apprenticeship Standards, and more.

California Teaching Fellows Foundation

Through strategic relationships with community colleges, public universities, and private colleges, California Teaching Fellows Foundation (CTFF) recruits college students to work in Expanded Learning programs as part of a pathway strategy to support the development of potential new teachers. CTFF is part of a larger "grow your own" pathway that begins training students from the community to work with students in Expanded Learning Programs and then supports them to enroll in the Rural Teacher Residency Collaborative (Collaborative).

The Collaborative is a partnership between CTFF, California State University Fresno, the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, and local school districts. Upon completion of the program, new teachers get hired in a nearby district, often in the same one where they completed their residency. Many of the teacher residents are students of color and first generation college students. Additionally, 53% of the mentor teachers are teaching in the district they attended for their K–12 education. One partner district reported that 100% of their mentor teachers were formerly K–12 students in their district.[20]

Figure 5. Competency Chart

CTC California Teaching Performance Expectations Domain	ASAP Connect California Core Competencies for Before and / or After School Professionals Skill Areas	NAA Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals Content Area
• Engaging and supporting all students in learning	• Families and Communities	• Family, School, and Community Relationships • Youth Engagement
• Creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning	• Curriculum and Learning Environment	• Cultural Competency and Responsiveness • Interaction with Children and Youth • Learning Environments and Curriculum
• Understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning	• Child and Youth Development • Curriculum and Learning Environment	• Learning Environments and Curriculum • Child/Youth Growth and Development
• Planning instruction and designing learning experienes for all students	• Child and Youth Development • Curriculum and Learning Environment	• Learning Environments and Curriculum • Child/Youth Growth and Development
• Accessing student learning	N/A	• Child/Youth Observation and Assessment
• Developing as a professional educator	• Professionalism	• Professional Development and Leadership • Program Planning and Development
N/A	• Healthy and Safe Environment	• Safety and Wellness
N/A	• Program Management (for PM staff)	N/A

Lessons learned from Early Learning apprenticeship models also highlight the critical need for a competent backbone organization to convene and support the various interest-holders and apprentices through the apprenticeship process.

Data Collection Opportunity

At the time of this publication's release, the American Institute of Research (AIR) is conducting and analyzing data from the Power of Us Workforce Survey. This national survey, the first of its kind, will surface extensive data from former and current Youth Development Workers. The survey is part of a larger Youth Fields Study, which was commissioned and funded by The Wallace Foundation as part of its mission to support and share effective ideas and practices[23]. This information can help to further define this workforce and its collective needs in order to inform policies and practices that result in meaningful support to the Expanded Learning workforce. Findings will begin to be released in the Fall of 2023. Additionally, CAN in partnership with many other members of the field continue to explore ways to create structures to collect data on an ongoing basis.

Conclusion

Today in California, the Expanded Learning Workforce creates conditions for children and youth to thrive while providing critical support to schools, families, and communities. As important as this workforce is to every community in California, it is non-centralized, hard to quantify, and has largely been overlooked by higher education and workforce development systems. Given the growth in Expanded Learning programs in California, systemic efforts must be undertaken to ensure a high-quality, sustainable Expanded Learning Workforce. Expanded Learning leaders have been laying the groundwork for these systemic changes since 2018. There has never been a better opportunity to build upon this groundwork and create the kinds of multi-sector, multi-agency collaboration at the state, regional, local, and site level.

References

Data

Data regarding the number of schools with (ASES and 21st CCLC) Expanded Learning grants reflect the most current grantee data available retrieved in 2022 from the California Department of Education (CDE) Expanded Learning Division Grantee Database. Data on the number of schools was retrieved from the CDE website. The data was retrieved between January and December 2022 representing a point in time, and as such, retrieval on a different day may have different results.

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