

AFTER SCHOOL

Policy Brief

Effectively Expanding California's After School System: Overcoming the Workforce Supply Obstacle

California's after school sector is undergoing a dramatic period of growth as a result of Proposition 49. Between the 2004-05 and 2007-08 school years, the sector will:

- Double the number of elementary and middle schools with publicly-funded after school programs, from about 2,000 to 4,000;
- Quadruple the number of high schools with after school programs from 44 to 190;
- Add 10,000-20,000 after school program jobs, most of which will be part-time, part-year and hourly positions.¹

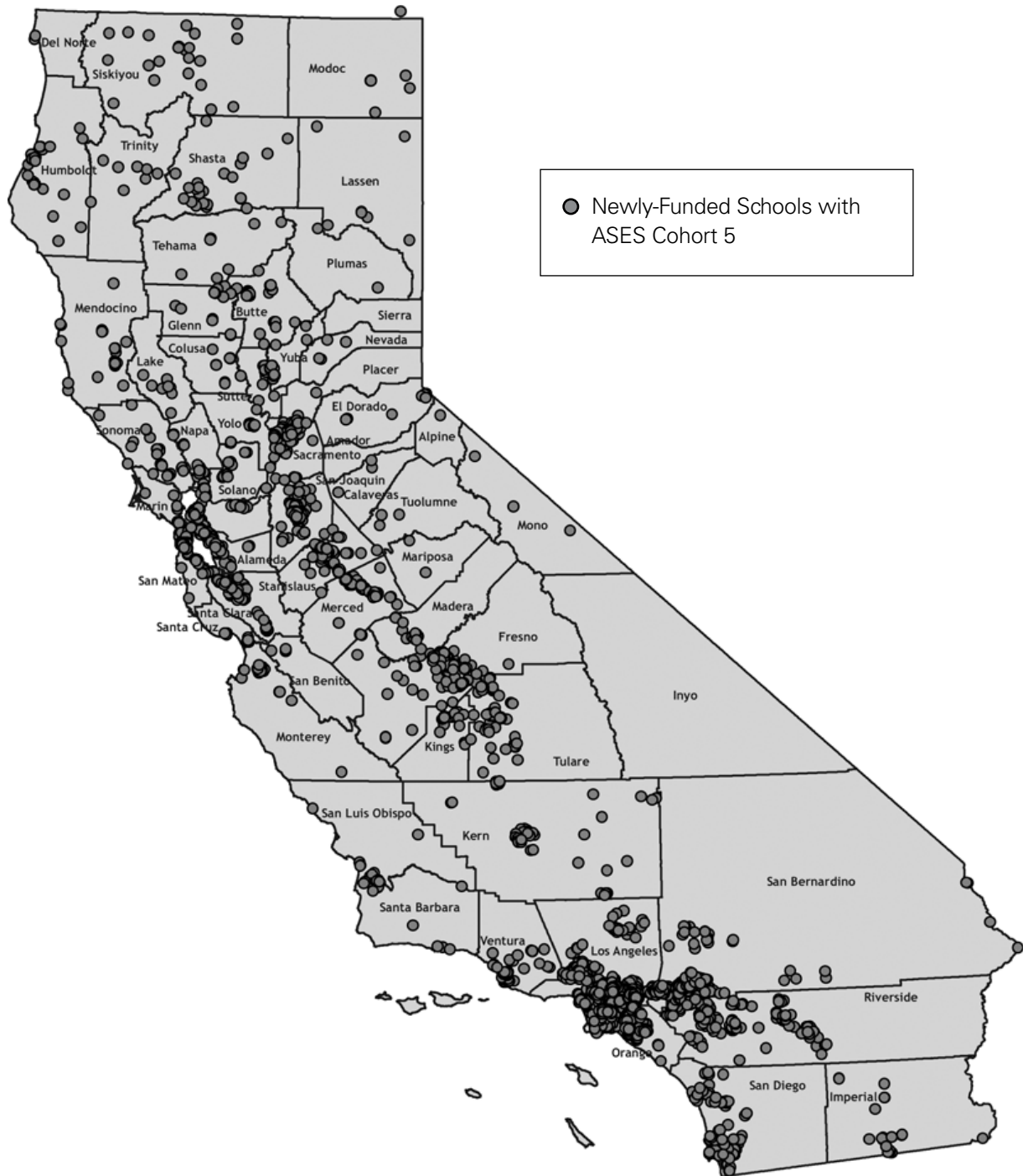
This rapid expansion has strained the state's after school infrastructure at all levels, from administration by the California Department of Education (CDE) to program staffing at local schools. The ability to effectively recruit, train and retain a high-quality workforce for these new programs is one of the primary challenges the state faces in effectively increasing after school opportunities for students.

About this Brief

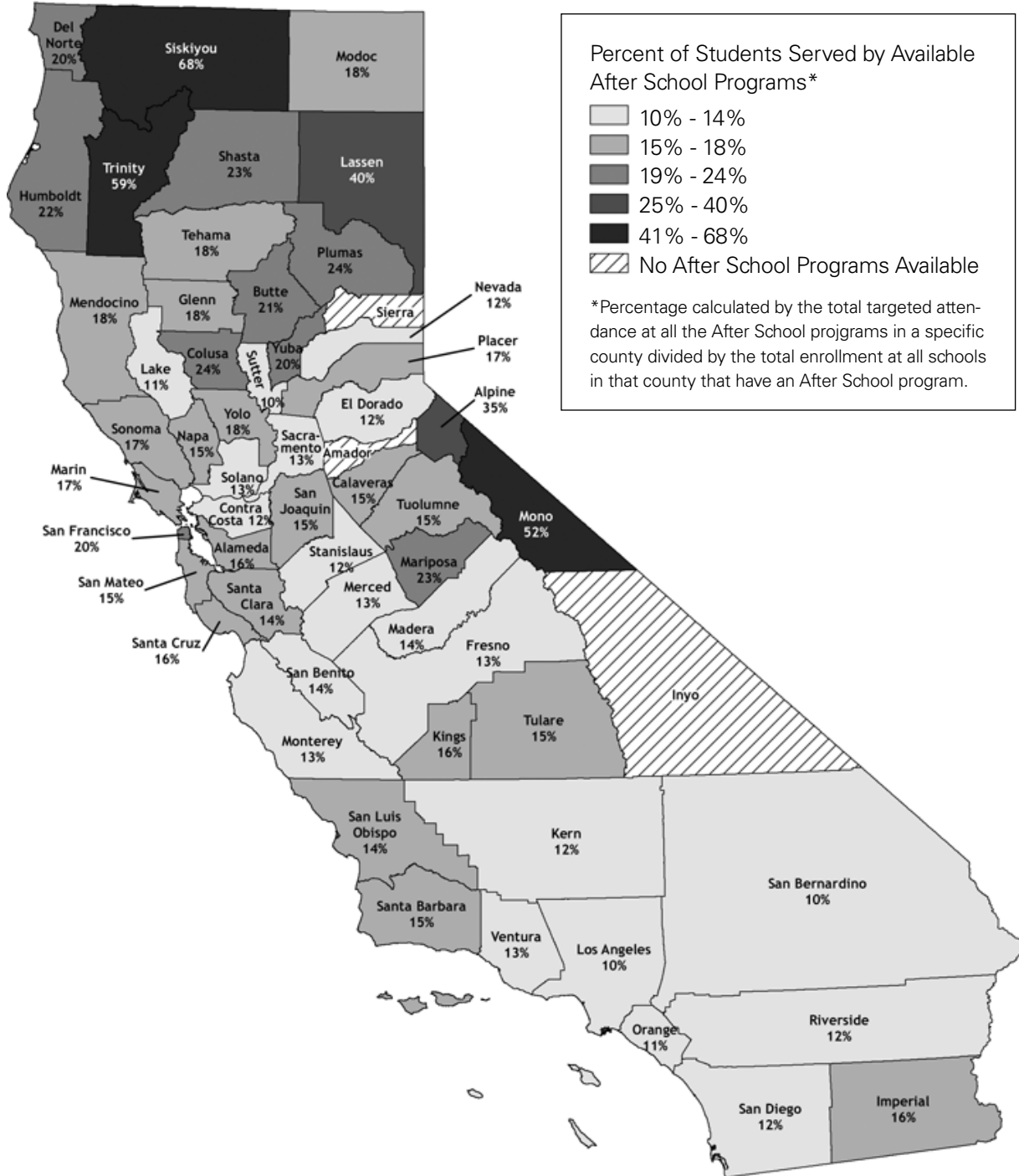
Data and findings presented in this brief are based on interviews with after school coordinators at 16 districts that experienced substantial growth in the number of publicly-funded programs they support.

1. California School-Age Consortium, *After school Corps: CalSAC's After school Workforce Development Project* (San Francisco; California School-Age Consortium, 2006).

Newly-Funded Schools with ASES Cohort 5: December 18, 2007



Students Served by After School Programs, by County: November 26, 2007



Prop. 49: A Sea Change in the Number of After School Programs Without Adequate Support

Prop 49 Implementation Timeline

November 2002: Proposition 49 passed by voters.

February 2006: Legislative Analyst's Office announced that Prop. 49 implementation provisions will trigger in the 2006-07 fiscal year.

September 2006: SB 638, the Prop. 49 implementing legislation, signed by Governor Schwarzenegger.

November 2006: Grant applications due for new and continuing programs.

February 2007: Grant awards announced; grantees required to return signed acknowledgement letter.

March 2007: Grantees required to implement programming to avoid future grant reductions.

March - April 2007: After school funds released to grantees after submitting signed acknowledgement to the California Department of Education.

Proposition 49, which voters passed in 2002, guaranteed more than a three-fold increase in state funding for after school programs, although rollout was dependent on the state budget meeting specific conditions. In 2006-07, the budget met those conditions and the legislation implementing the proposition (SB 638) was passed. Subsequently, an additional \$550 million per year began to flow into new and expanded after school programs that were funded through the After School Education and Safety Program (ASES). **This unprecedented expansion of programs over a few months presented many challenges, and primary among them was the ability to hire new staff.**

Initial Challenges to Effective Program Expansion

Issue #1: Short Ramp-Up Time

The after school infrastructure at the state level was not prepared to handle the additional workload brought on by Proposition 49's enactment. CDE, the state agency responsible for administering the program, had only a small central staff and limited field-based support through its Regional Support

Teams. Although SB 638 had increased funding available to CDE for after school program support, it would take time to hire the staff necessary to effectively reach the expanded number of after school providers. Similarly, at the local level, some school districts had large, successful after school programs in place; but the majority of districts eligible for new funds had little experience or familiarity with after school programs. They also had varying levels of staff capacity.

Over a quarter of the new grants were made to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that had not previously administered ASES or 21st Century after school programs. These grantees were encumbered by a unique set of challenges to rapidly develop programs. They reported that their lack of an administrative infrastructure was a major barrier to implementation, since everything from hiring a district level coordinator to

developing personnel policies to ordering supplies had to be completed within months. Some new district-level coordinators were not familiar with the resources available to them, including Regional Support Teams, making program start-up more difficult.

Issue #2: Limited Applicant Pool

After school work tends to be part-time, part-year and low-paying, so recruiting and retaining quality people has been a perennial challenge. Even with increases in program funding and pay rates of \$10-\$15 per hour, after school programs still found themselves drawing from a limited applicant pool. Compounding this challenge, minimum educational requirements for program staff were often easily misinterpreted or misread, further discouraging potential candidates from applying. The tight link between program quality and staffing weighed on the minds of many coordinators, since, as one put it, “Without staff, there is no program.”

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Issue #3: Insufficient State Level Administrative Support

Local start-up and expansion efforts were further hampered by administrative delays at CDE, which had its own capacity challenges. In an attempt to ensure that new funding would provide safe and enriching activities for children in the 2006-07 school year as intended, CDE mandated that grantees open new programs within two months of receiving their funding. Unfortunately, delays in processing award letters and funding meant that many programs were notified late in spring 2007 that their grant applications had been approved, leaving very little time to start up programs prior to the end of the school year.

The result was burdensome for grantees. They were told by CDE to “use or lose” their funding, but in too many cases the grantees had not yet received formal approval or the funding required to start their programs. Grantees with established after school programs were best equipped to wait out the delay, because many had external partners that could provide bridge funding. School districts with either healthy budgets or particularly savvy administrators were also fortunate, because they were able to identify sufficient funding to mount programs prior to receiving their grant award.

Fortunately, administrative problems at CDE were largely limited to the first year of expansion and are not likely to occur again. Most grantees are now on track to implement all funded programs for the 2007-08 school year, though many are not fully enrolled due to continued staffing challenges.

Issue #4: High Staff Turnover

While California is unlikely to expand the program in the near future, the relatively high rates of staff turnover in the after school field will require continuous attention. For this reason, ASES, 21st Century and ASSETS grantees will need to adopt successful workforce recruitment strategies in order to ensure that publicly-funded after school programs are well-staffed and able to provide high-quality experiences to students across the state.

Stop-Gap Approaches Employed to Meet the Staffing Challenges

The majority of grantees have traditionally relied on the following four basic recruitment strategies to hire new staff to rapidly expand their after school programs:

1. Hire teachers and classroom aides from the school where the program is located.
2. Post open positions at EdJoin and on grantee websites.
3. Participate in job fairs.
4. Contract with after school service providers to staff programs.

The Limitations of Recruiting Staff from Within for New or Expanded After School Programs

Success on the top three recruitment strategies depends heavily on the number of school staff interested in working in an after school program, the number of potential candidates who are aware of “insider” web sites like EdJoin and the popularity of local job fairs. Thus, the rate of success varies greatly.

Recruiting from within the school offers some distinct advantages; after school staff will be familiar with the school’s teaching philosophy, curriculum, students and policies, so the goals and expectations of the school day and the after school program will be better aligned. But this strategy limits both the number and diversity of potential candidates. School day staff, and teachers in particular, may have limited hours available to dedicate to an after school program, which can make rapid recruitment much more difficult. Furthermore, without additional training or previous experience, school day staff may find it difficult to change strategies and operate in an atmosphere that has complimentary, but different goals. Since after school programs are voluntary and often try to enroll students who may not be successful in the regular school day programs, after school time needs to look and feel substantially different from the school day to be successful.

Partnering for Success

The grantees that are most successful in quickly recruiting sufficient staff have existing partnerships with organizations that specialize in after school programming, such as THINK Together, local Boys and Girls Clubs, and city parks and recreation departments. External partners bring benefits to after school grantees, including sophisticated recruitment strategies, training and professional development, as well as bridge funding. These partnerships are most common among existing after school grantees, though some new grantees have also established relationships with external program providers prior to applying for state funding.

The strongest after school partnerships benefit from shared responsibility and clear expectations. Community-based partners often bring in-depth expertise in youth development practice, while their school-based counterparts have greater familiarity with effective academic enrichment strategies. Blending the expertise of both partners in staff training and development is essential to the overall quality of comprehensive after school programs. Formal memoranda of understanding or contracts are effective ways to clearly define which party is responsible for meeting specific deliverables.

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Suggested Approaches to Going Outside the Network And Reaching More Applicants

In addition to the approaches previously mentioned, the following guidelines may help after school programs reach larger applicant pools, achieve improved candidate diversity and lessen the stress associated with starting up new programs.

Reach Candidates Outside the Education Network

Popular websites for job hunters, such as Craigslist.org, Idealist.org, OpportunityNOCs.org and CALSAC.org, provide free or low-cost options to reach a larger pool of candidates, many of whom may not be familiar with insider education job posting websites. Additionally, California's network of Career One Stop Centers reach thousands of job seekers each year, and many local Workforce Investment Boards have youth-oriented workforce development programs that can benefit after school programs. Local colleges and universities are also a popular source for staff recruitment, and most offer free web postings and job fairs.

Create Incentives for Referrals

Leveraging a practice that has been successful in the business world, some grantees are now offering bonuses to staff whose referrals are hired by the program. Such incentives

are often tied to the performance of the new employee, so, for example, a bonus would be triggered only after that employee completed a predetermined amount of service.

Improve Applicants' Ability to Understand And Meet Requirements And Apply for Open Positions

Applying for a position in a publicly-funded after school program can be a daunting experience, even for the most seasoned youth worker. For starters, the number of acronyms used in the field can be very confusing (e.g., ASES, NCLB and IA). In addition, the academic requirements may needlessly discourage some of the best candidates. Successful strategies to remove these barriers include writing clear job announcements and offering assistance toward completing the requirements, such as:

- Capitalizing on district Instructional Aide testing days by including after school applicants;
- Providing “test prep” or “refresher” classes for staff who may need help to feel comfortable taking district tests to meet NCLB requirements.

One innovative grantee even created a “Fast Track Job Fair,” during which interested candidates could complete every step of the application and selection process while on the site, thereby substantially shortening the recruitment process.

Leverage Others' Expertise

As previously noted, many successful after school program expansion efforts have relied on partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) that specialize in providing after school programs. Such relationships are mutually beneficial: CBOs gain access to funding and space, and grantees benefit from CBOs' expertise in planning and implementing out-of-school programs. Other potential partners include citizen service groups (e.g., AmeriCorps), volunteer service programs run by local institutions (e.g., schools), and colleges and universities, particularly those that have teacher training programs or other fields of study in which students can earn credit by working in an after school program.

Make After School Work a More Competitive Job Choice

Well-paying, steady work draws a broader pool of applicants and helps retain staff. Grantees are improving the attractiveness of after school jobs by:

- Combining after school and school day positions into full-time work;
- Enhancing staff development and learning opportunities;
- Creating career ladders that allow entry-level program staff to advance.

Furthermore, strategies such as combining positions and reimbursing staff for travel, are likely to be more necessary for programs that are located away from urban centers.

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