


The Quality Imperative:

A State Guide to Achieving the Promise of Extended Learning Opportunities

A report by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

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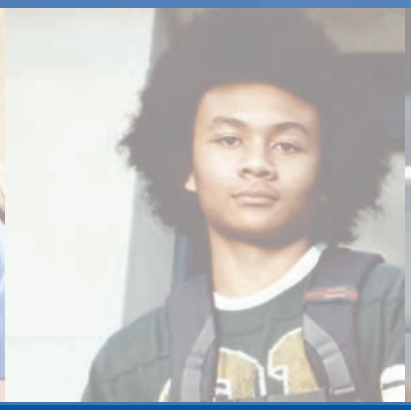
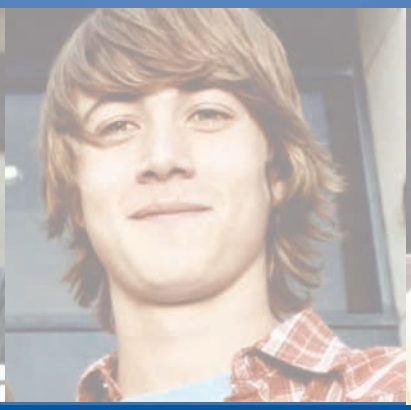


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Executive Summary

Extended learning opportunities (ELOs) provide safe, structured learning environments for students outside the traditional school day. ELOs include afterschool and summer learning programs as well as before-school, evening, and weekend programs.[1] ELOs come in many forms and can include tutoring, volunteering, academic support, community service, organized sports, homework help, and art and music programs. ELOs are based in schools, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, child care centers, and community-based organizations, such as 4-H Clubs and Boys and Girls Clubs. No matter where they are located, ELOs complement what children and youth learn during school in ways that support student success. For this reason, effective ELOs should be considered an integral part of state elementary and secondary (K-12) education systems.

Research demonstrates that high quality ELOs can improve a variety of student outcomes. Participation in high quality ELOs is linked to improvements in academic achievement, school attendance, student engagement, work-study habits, and social and emotional development.[2] In addition, ELOs offer support for working families and can help foster stronger links among schools, families, and communities.[3] The supports and services that high quality ELOs provide are particularly important for low-income and minority youth who often lack sustained access to enriching activities and academic support during nonschool hours.[4]

All ELOs, however, do not produce similar results. In fact, low quality ELOs fail to show positive impacts and can even have negative effects on children.[5] Therefore, governors, chief state school officers, and other state leaders should act to support the development, sustainability, and availability of high quality ELOs.

High quality ELOs share a number of common features.[6] High quality ELOs set focused and challenging goals for their participants that are tied to clear programmatic missions, and they use frequent evaluation to improve their programs over time. In addition, high quality ELOs provide an array of content-rich programming that engages participants and builds their academic and nonacademic skills. Staff members in high quality ELOs develop positive, constructive relationships with participants. Furthermore, ELO program coordinators and staff members develop strong partnerships with school administrators and teachers, participant family members, and community organizations. Importantly, high quality ELOs recruit, train, support, and retain qualified and effective program staff. Finally, high quality ELOs have a low participant-to-staff ratio, an appropriate total enrollment, sufficient program resources, and the ability to sustain funding over the long term.

The importance of ensuring ELO quality has grown in recent years as state investments in ELOs have skyrocketed. In fiscal year 2006, states budgeted at least $897 million for afterschool programs; this conservative estimate excludes funding for sports and tutoring programs as well as most non-dedicated funding streams in which afterschool programs were just one of a number of eligible expenses.[7] States also administer federal ELO funding streams. These include the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, which at $1.1 billion for fiscal 2008 is the largest dedicated source of federal funding for ELOs, and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a non-dedicated funding stream with estimated federal expenditures of $1 billion in fiscal 2005 for school-age youth attending child care centers.[8] Both chief state school officers, as heads of the agencies that administer the bulk of ELO dollars, and governors, as chief executives of their states, have strong incentives to focus on ELO quality. Better quality ELOs mean improved student outcomes and higher returns on investment.

To improve ELO quality, state leaders have initiated efforts to develop program standards, create program self-assessment tools, and provide technical assistance to local programs. State leaders can build on and strengthen these efforts by integrating them into a broader state ELO quality system. State leaders can take the following actions to implement a comprehensive state ELO quality system:

- **Establish an ELO quality team of key stakeholders to envision, develop, and administer a state ELO quality system.** Because public funding for ELOs flows from federal, state, and local entities via education, human services, and other funding streams, supporting ELO quality must be a team effort. Statewide

afterschool networks, now present in three-quarters of the states, offer one example of an effective vehicle to collaborate across sectors, agencies, and levels of government.[9] These public-private coalitions bring together state leaders and grassroots supporters to pursue state goals through ELOs, and they have been at the forefront of developing and coordinating policies to improve ELO quality.

- **Identify federal and state funding sources to support ELO quality.** Set-asides in federal ELO funding streams provide a base states can use to finance their quality efforts. Both the federal Child Care and Development Fund and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program have a percentage of their funds set aside for states to use to improve program quality. States can also incorporate quality set-asides into state ELO funding streams. For example, the **California** Department of Education can set aside 1.5 percent of funds appropriated for the After School Education and Safety Program to provide technical assistance, evaluation, and training services and to offer local assistance funds to support program improvement.[10]

- **Specify state goals for ELOs and set research-based ELO program standards.** Defining state goals for ELOs helps states determine what high quality ELOs should look like, how to support them, and how to hold them accountable. ELO program standards articulate the conditions that, if met, will enable programs to succeed in meeting their goals. **Michigan**, for example, has created Model Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs to provide a flexible model of ELO excellence.[11] States should base their goal- and standard-setting on emerging research that links specific ELO program features to improved participant outcomes.

- **Measure the extent to which ELOs meet program standards and demonstrate expected results.** For example, **Massachusetts** evaluates ELO effectiveness with its Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO). The state also helps ELOs compare their practices to program standards with its Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT). SAYO and APT meet criteria for effective evaluation; they are adaptable, rely on multiple sources of data, are statistically sound, and are reasonable and research-based. Measures such as these enable states to determine whether programs are meeting policymakers' expectations and to support ELO programs as they strive for excellence.

- **Provide incentives to improve ELO quality.** Increasingly, states are spurring improvements in ELO effectiveness with quality rating systems and mechanisms that tie funding to program quality. Quality rating systems evaluate ELOs according to whether they meet specific benchmarks in a public and easy-to-understand manner (e.g., using a scale of one to five stars). Examples of mechanisms to tie funding to ELO quality levels include competitive grant programs, in which only the highest quality programs receive funding, and tiered reimbursement systems, which provide more funds to afterschool programs with higher levels of quality.

- **Support a strong ELO workforce.** ELO quality rests largely on the strength of the individuals working in the programs. Because of this, states can boost ELO quality by supporting the recruitment, retention, and development of effective ELO staff. To create a framework for professional development activities, states can establish core knowledge and competencies that delineate what ELO workers should know and be able to do. For example, the **Kansas** and **Missouri** Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals form the basis for ongoing training activities.

- **Connect students with high quality ELOs.** To ensure that students have access to ELOs, states can perform ELO supply and demand analyses, target resources to underserved populations, and inform parents and students of high quality ELOs. Many states have undertaken a supply and demand analysis in recent years. **Montana**, for example, has generated county-by-county supply and demand maps that show where programs are available and what percentage of school-age children with working parents is served.

Implementing these seven strategies can help state leaders boost ELO quality to better support children, families, and communities.

Why Are High Quality ELOs Important?

I. Why Are High Quality ELOs Important?

Extended learning opportunities (ELOs) support state goals in education, economic development, and other arenas by providing safe, structured learning environments for students outside the regular school day. ELOs include afterschool and summer learning programs as well as before-school, evening, and weekend programs.[12] ELOs vary significantly in goals, content, structure, and duration. However, they typically offer programming that includes academic support (e.g., acceleration, remediation, and individualized tutoring) along with some combination of enrichment, mentoring, sports, or other extracurricular activities.[13]

ELOs are critical supports within high-functioning education systems. Because ELOs offer small, flexible learning environments, they often provide an ideal context for addressing the specific educational and developmental needs of individual students. Student access to ELOs has grown rapidly during the past decade, as evidenced by increases in federal, state, and local funding. These investments have been fueled, in part, by research demonstrating that ELOs can produce these outcomes:

- **Boost students' academic gains.** ELOs can improve student achievement in reading, mathematics, and other subjects.[14] For example, the *Study of Promising Afterschool Programs* compared elementary school students who participated in high quality afterschool programs for two years with students who spent one to three days per week without adult supervision after school. The average math score increase for program participants was higher than that of 70 percent of low-supervision students.[15] Moreover, a review of ELO evaluations found that programs focused on improving reading or mathematics achievement for at-risk students were generally successful.[16] Because of their impact on student achievement, ELOs can be a key strategy to narrow the achievement gap (see How Can High Quality ELOs Narrow the Achievement Gap?).

- **Increase student engagement.** A review of 27 experimental and quasi-experimental program evaluations found that ELOs have been linked to better attitudes toward school, higher educational aspirations, and improved school attendance.[17] For example, an evaluation of the Los Angeles Better Educated Students for Tomorrow afterschool program found that 83 percent of students liked school more since participating in the program, with over half indicating that they liked school "a lot more."[18]

- **Cultivate students' work-study habits.** ELOs can positively impact participants' work-study habits. For example, the *Study of Promising Afterschool Programs* found that 58 percent of elementary school students who regularly attend high quality ELOs outgained the average unsupervised student with respect to teacher-reported work habits over the course of one year.[19] Similarly, in contrast to their peers in unsupervised settings, elementary school students who regularly attend high quality ELO programs show increases in persisting with tasks, paying attention in class, following directions, completing classroom assignments on time, and completing homework.[20]

- **Improve student behavior and social and emotional development.** Students say participation in ELOs helps them feel safe, maintain self-control, curtail fighting, and avoid premarital pregnancy and risk-taking behaviors such as alcohol and drug use. Participation in ELOs also has been linked to decreases in suspensions and expulsions, improved self-confidence and self-esteem, and increased positive interactions with peers and adults.[21] For example, a meta-analysis of ELOs using research-based instructional methods found that, relative to the average student in a control group, the average student in these ELOs scored 14 percentiles higher on measures of self-perception, 10 percentiles higher on measures of school-bonding, 12 percentiles higher on measures of positive social behaviors, and 9 percentiles better on measures of drug use.[22]

- **Support working families.** Parents whose children attend ELOs worry less about their children's safety and are better able to balance work and family life.[23] Moreover, parents say their child's participation in ELOs has enabled them to find better jobs, work longer hours, and miss less work.[24] For example, in an evaluation of ELOs in New York City, 94 percent of parents rated the programs as convenient, 60 percent

missed less work because of the programs, 59 percent reported that the programs helped them keep their job, and 54 percent said the programs helped them work more hours.[25]

- **Build stronger connections among families, schools, and communities.** Parents of children who regularly attend ELOs that seek to engage families are more likely to be involved in school-related events, attend parent-teacher conferences, and help students with their homework.[26] For example, an evaluation of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program found that parents of middle school participants were more likely to attend parent-teacher organization meetings (34 versus 28 percent), to attend afterschool events (47 versus 40 percent), and to volunteer to help out at school (18 versus 15 percent).[27] In addition, families with students in ELOs have credited these programs with increasing their awareness of community supports.[28] Particularly for low-income parents who may not have experienced educational success in their own schooling, ELO staff can play a critical role, serving as liaisons to teachers and administrators and empowering parents as advocates for their children.

How Can High Quality ELOs Narrow the Achievement Gap?

The term "achievement gap" is used to denote ongoing disparities in educational achievement between low-income and more affluent students and between black and Hispanic students and their white and Asian peers. Achievement gaps are evident as early as kindergarten, and they often persist and widen as students advance in their schooling. Consider these statistics:

- Among children entering kindergarten in 1998, cognitive achievement scores of those with high socioeconomic status were, on average, 60 percent above the scores of children with low socioeconomic status. Moreover, mathematics achievement was 21 percent lower among black children and 19 percent lower among Hispanic children than it was among white children, on average.[31]
- On the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment, 14 percent of black fourth graders and 17 percent of Hispanic fourth graders scored proficient, compared with 42 percent of white fourth graders and 45 percent of Asian fourth graders. In eighth grade, 12 percent of black students and 14 percent of Hispanic students scored proficient in reading, compared with 38 percent of white students and 40 percent of Asian students.[32]
- On the 2007 NAEP mathematics assessment, 15 percent of black fourth graders and 22 percent of Hispanic fourth graders scored at or above proficient in mathematics, compared with 51 percent of white students and 59 percent of Asian students. In eighth grade, 11 percent of black students and 15 percent of Hispanic students scored proficient in mathematics, compared with 41 percent of white students and 49 percent of Asian students.[33]

Achievement gaps also feed gaps in educational attainment:

- In 2003, the graduation rate for white students was 78 percent, compared with 72 percent for Asian students, 55 percent for black students, and 53 percent for Hispanic students.[34]
- As of 2005, among individuals ages 16 to 24, 6 percent of whites were high school dropouts, compared with 10 percent of blacks and 22 percent of Hispanics.[35]
- In 2003, just 10 percent of Hispanic and 18 percent of African American young adults earned a bachelor's or higher degree, compared with 34 percent of white students.[36]

Gaps in achievement and educational attainment are attributable to disparities in supports, resources, experiences, and opportunities that students encounter both in school and out of school. Within schools, low-income and minority students are less likely to receive instruction from highly qualified teachers, attend schools with adequate resources, and have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum.[37]

Although many ELOs have demonstrated positive impacts such as these, too many ELOs fail to reach their potential. This is one of the reasons why research findings on ELOs' effects have been mixed. Although high quality ELOs have demonstrated positive impacts on youth outcomes, low quality ELOs fail to show positive impacts on student outcomes and can even have negative effects on children.[29]

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For instance, a case study of a program that exhibited relatively negative staff-child interactions, poor emotional climate, and few provisions for child autonomy found that attendees showed declines in their report card grades, peer relations, and work habits.[30]

Because of the divergent results of high and low quality ELOs, state leaders face a quality imperative. Fortunately, chief state school officers and governors have administrative, budgetary, and legislative levers at their disposal to achieve the promise of ELOs.

Differences outside the school walls, however, also contribute significantly to the achievement gap. This can be seen most clearly by examining seasonal differences in learning. When school is out over the summer months, low-income children experience an average loss in reading achievement that approximates two months of schooling while middle- and upper-income children tend to hold steady or make slight advances.[38] These losses, which result in great part from unequal access to learning opportunities in children's home and community environments, accumulate over students' academic careers.[39] A longitudinal study of students attending Baltimore City public schools found that 66 percent of the ninth-grade achievement gap between low-income and upper-income students was due to differences in summer learning during the elementary school years.[40]

High quality ELOs can help narrow the achievement gap by boosting student achievement for low-income and minority students. As described above, the *Study of Promising Afterschool Programs* found increases in mathematics achievement among elementary students attending high quality afterschool programs. Of the elementary students sampled for that study, 89 percent received free or reduced-price lunch at school and 88 percent were students of color. High quality summer programs have also proven effective for at risk students. A study of the Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) summer program, designed to improve low-income children's academic skills, found that participants gained about one month's worth of reading skills more than their counterparts in the control group.[41]

In fact, several studies have found that students at risk of poor academic performance often achieve the greatest academic gains when participating in ELOs.[42] For example, an evaluation of ELOs in New York City found that the average first-year math score increase for poor students actively participating in ELOs was higher than that of 57 percent of similar students who did not participate. In contrast, this statistic was 45 percent among wealthier students.[43]

Despite the demonstrated success of high quality ELOs in boosting academic success for low-income and minority students, parents of these students report greater difficulty in locating high quality ELOs that are affordable, interesting, convenient, age-appropriate, and administered by trustworthy adults.[44] This challenge is greatest during the summer months, when low-income and minority parents are far more likely to be worried about their children falling behind academically and about finding affordable programs that interest their children.[45]

By increasing access to high quality ELOs among low-income and minority students, state policymakers can compensate for unequal access to learning opportunities outside of school and narrow the achievement gap. Reform initiatives that focus on the regular school day are critical. But to be most effective, school-based reforms must be coupled with efforts to provide low-income and minority students with high quality learning opportunities outside the regular school day and year.

II. Features of High Quality ELOs

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Given the positive relationship between ELO quality and program outcomes, understanding what high quality ELOs look like is crucial. Fortunately, recent research has tied specific ELO features to improved participant outcomes. Much of this research is based on programs that serve high percentages of low-income or minority students. Shared features of high quality programs include:[46]

- **A clear programmatic mission, focused and challenging goals, and frequent evaluation that supports ongoing program improvement.** To better understand the importance of these features, consider the James Irvine Foundation's eight-year CORAL (Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning) initiative. CORAL provides ELOs to elementary school youth in five California cities. It aims to increase the academic achievement of youth, but a midterm evaluation found that academic results were lacking. To remedy the situation, CORAL changed its mission to focus more specifically on improving struggling readers' literacy skills. The program also developed two goals aligned with that mission: improving participants' reading levels as measured by grades and standardized tests and helping participants develop a love of reading. To meet these goals, CORAL implemented literacy programming three to four days per week for 60 to 90 minutes each day.[47] Furthermore, leaders trained staff on teaching strategies to support student literacy, monitored staff activities, coached staff as necessary, and collected and analyzed data to track progress.[48] These changes led to increases in reading scores. In the most recent evaluation of the program, the participants gained, on average, nearly half a grade's worth of reading.[49]

- **An array of content-rich programming that engages participants and builds their academic and nonacademic skills.** High quality ELOs are not glorified babysitting. Participants are not engaged in busywork, watching television, or just hanging out. After all, the "L" in "ELO" stands for learning. Participants in high quality ELOs are building skills and knowledge in both academic and nonacademic areas. In a high school job training program, for example, students might learn programming languages for Web design and gain an understanding of proper workplace behavior. For learning to be most successful, participants need to be engaged with content that is appropriately challenging (i.e., content that is neither too easy nor too difficult). To boost participant engagement, high quality ELOs give students the opportunity to choose activities that will motivate them. For example, programs may offer culturally relevant activities to engage participants and build their self-confidence. The vehicles used to deliver content are also critical in inspiring participants to learn. Educational approaches in high quality ELOs include debate, hands-on activities, one-on-one tutoring, and project-based learning.

- **Positive, constructive relationships between staff and participants.** High quality programs help participants forge strong connections with caring adults. This is particularly important for students who may feel isolated, disconnected, and unsuccessful during the regular school day. In practice, positive staff-child relationships are characterized by staff treating program participants with acceptance and respect, providing emotional support, setting appropriate limits and behavioral expectations, and communicating high expectations.[50] Students with supportive relationships early in high school are twice as likely as the average youth to be doing well, overall, with respect to economic security, health, and community involvement at the end of high school.[51]

- **Strong connections with schools, families, and communities.** These connections include schools and ELOs sharing resources and information on student goals, ELOs partnering with local universities to expand participants' postsecondary horizons, and ELO staff providing structured opportunities for parent involvement in an open and welcoming environment. Connections like these increase the likelihood that students will participate in ELOs at a high level and boost ELO relevance.

- **Qualified, well-supported, and stable program staff.** Whether a result of formal or informal training, education, or individual talents and experience, program leaders and frontline staff must be able to support student learning and develop positive relationships. Programs working with academically at-risk students should emphasize attracting and retaining high quality staff members who have experience working with at-risk or disadvantaged youth and addressing motiva-

tional issues. Some ELOs have found improved student outcomes in programs with lower staff turnover, more certified teachers, more staff with college degrees, and directors with higher levels of education.[52]

- **A low participant-to-staff ratio and an appropriate total enrollment.** Having a sufficient number of qualified staff relative to the number of participants is essential to address individual participant needs, support individual or small-group activities, and develop positive relationships. The National AfterSchool Association recommends a maximum participant-to-staff ratio of 15 to 1 for participants age six and above.[53] It is possible, however, that ratios should be even lower: A recent study of high quality ELOs found that, for most activities, the participant-to-staff ratio fell below 10 to 1.[54] Moreover, total enrollment should not overwhelm program space.

- **Sufficient program resources and the ability to sustain funding over the long term.** To support participant skill development and mastery, high quality ELOs have sufficient program resources, including safe and adequate space and facilities, age-appropriate curricula and materials, and a location that is accessible to participants and families. Ongoing financial resources are needed to acquire physical resources and support a qualified staff. Consequently, the abilities to attract and use diverse funding and to develop and use external partnerships are extremely important.

Ideally, these research-based promising practices would be embodied in all ELOs, but ELOs are too often plagued by uneven quality. To address this problem, many states have initiated efforts to improve ELO quality. For example, states have developed program standards, created program self-assessment tools, and provided technical assistance to local programs. To be most effective, these efforts should be based on research and best practices. For example, state ELO program standards should embody the shared features of high quality ELOs just described. Furthermore, efforts to improve ELO quality should not stand alone. Rather, they should be a part of a comprehensive state ELO quality system that functions to ensure and enhance ELO effectiveness and efficiency.By spearheading the development of a state ELO quality system, governors and chief state school officers can substantially boost ELO effectiveness and position states to realize the benefits of high quality ELOs.

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State Actions to Develop an ELO Quality System

III. State Actions to Develop an ELO Quality System

To develop an ELO quality system, state leaders can take these actions:

1. **Create an ELO quality team** of key stakeholders to envision, develop, and administer an ELO quality system.
2. **Identify federal and state funding sources** to support the state ELO quality system.
3. **Set state ELO goals and program standards** that are research-based and adaptable to the wide variety of programs.
4. **Measure ELO performance** by determining the extent to which programs meet state ELO program standards and demonstrate results tied to state goals and program mission.
5. **Provide incentives to improve ELO quality** through quality rating systems and mechanisms that tie funding to program quality.
6. **Support a strong ELO workforce** by helping to recruit talented individuals into the field and by providing for professional development.
7. **Connect students with quality ELOs** by performing an ELO supply and demand analysis, targeting resources to ensure availability and access to high quality programs among those with the greatest need, and informing parents and students of high quality opportunities.

Importantly, each strategy needs to be integrated and coordinated with the others to ensure a comprehensive approach to improving program quality.

States do not need to develop an ELO quality system from scratch. Rather, they can build off of existing quality efforts related to the child care system, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), and Supplemental Educational Services (SES), along with state-funded and private programs. Too often, these efforts to improve program quality occur in isolation from one another. By creating a comprehensive ELO quality system, state policymakers can ease provider access to multiple funding streams, reduce duplication or confusion of efforts, provide state ELO quality leaders the opportunity to learn from each others' efforts, and increase efficiency.

Action 1: Create an ELO Quality Team

States should build an ELO quality team of key stakeholders to craft and guide the implementation and management of an ELO quality system. A successful ELO quality team will include individuals from different sectors, agencies, departments, and levels of government who have expertise to bring to bear on ELO quality. The governor's office, state education agency, and child care office are key agencies that should take part in statewide ELO quality discussions. Other relevant agencies include health, labor, youth development, and juvenile justice. Cross-agency collaboration counteracts what would otherwise be a diffuse approach to fostering ELO quality at the state level, driven by fragmented funding streams that lead to differences in program goals, administrative structures, and philosophical approaches.

As important leaders and communicators in their states, chief state school officers and governors are well positioned to bridge these differences by convening a team to help ensure ELO excellence. For example, **Arkansas** Governor Mike Beebe created the Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Programs. The task force included representatives from the state's departments of education and human services, K-12 and postsecondary institutions, the private sector, and local and state elected government. The task force set forth a framework for ELO standards and recommendations for promoting quality in its report, *Enriching Arkansas Children's Lives through high quality Out-Of-School Activities.*[55]

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In building an ELO quality team, states can use preexisting collaborative groups, such as statewide afterschool networks, children's cabinets, and P-16 councils, to take advantage of available state capacity. For example, an ELO quality team can be a working group of a commission or task force or the quality committee of a statewide afterschool network. In **Illinois**, a legislative task force issued recommendations in 2002 on supporting quality ELOs statewide. The state's afterschool network—the Illinois After-school Partnership—has since been instrumental in implementing those recommendations. One of the network's workgroups is creating a common framework to evaluate ELO outcomes. Statewide afterschool networks like the Illinois After-school Partnership exist in 38 states with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.[56] These networks are based on statewide, regional, and local partnerships, and they focus on boosting ELO effectiveness. A statewide afterschool network can be a key resource and perhaps lead the effort to develop a statewide system for ensuring high quality ELOs.

An ELO quality team needs to reach out to additional stakeholders to take advantage of their expertise, create buy-in, and ensure that state ELO quality policies are workable, given realities on the ground. For example, **New York**'s 21st CCLCs must use a quality self-assessment tool to improve ELO effectiveness. The New York State Afterschool Network led a collaborative effort by more than 200 afterschool program providers, stakeholders, and advocates to develop the tool. The diversity of the coalition that developed the tool ultimately strengthened the end product. Similarly, the development of ELO quality systems should be informed by stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, principals, businesses, foundations, program providers, and community-based organizations. Elected officials at the local and state levels, such as mayors and state legislators, should also play a key role.

Collaboration at the state level that leads to a shared vision of what ELO quality is and how to pursue it should drive coordination within agencies to help implement that vision. Within state education agencies, for example, individuals who administer Title I, the 21st CCLC program, Supplemental Educational Services (SES), Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grants, and other student support programs can work together to address ELO quality from the state education agency perspective. The **North Carolina** Department of Public Instruction's 21st CCLC staff members incorporate consultants from SES, Teacher Quality, Reading First, Exceptional Services, and additional divisions into their training and orientation sessions for 21st CCLC grantees. In the **Alabama** Department of Education, staff in charge of 21st CCLC and the state's service learning program cosponsor and convene conferences focused on quality. By fostering cooperative efforts such as these, a state's ELO quality team can ensure sound implementation of its ELO quality system.

An ELO quality team should be able to evolve as a state moves from envisioning a coordinated ELO quality system, to implementing the system, and, finally, to managing the system. In the long run, states can create more centralized governance structures for ELOs. Some models for this concept currently exist, and other states are considering moves in this direction. **Connecticut**'s legislature has established an After School Advisory Council that requires the state's commissioner of education, commissioner of social services, and executive director of the children's commission to work with other council members to produce biannual ELO policy recommendations. In **Rhode Island**, leaders from the governor's office, the state education agency, the legislature, and the statewide afterschool network, as well as others, have been discussing the possibility of creating a state-level coordinating body for ELOs to manage ELO funding streams from different departments, administer a statewide quality system, and integrate ELOs into state education reform plans. Newly developed state governance models in the field of early childhood education can serve as prototypes for ELOs. For example, **Pennsylvania**'s Office of Child Development and Early Learning brings together early childhood education programs from both the education and public welfare departments into one office that is on both departments' organizational charts. **Washington** has created its Department of Early Learning—a cabinet-

level state agency combining initiatives that had previously been under the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Regardless of the extent to which a state consolidates governance of ELOs, establishing an ELO quality team is a key step in developing a state ELO quality system. Establishing such a team enables states to reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and develop a shared approach to ELO quality.

Action 2: Identify Funding Sources for ELO Quality

States should identify federal and state funds they can use to develop an ELO quality system to ensure that children receive the highest possible quality of care, dollars are spent as efficiently as possible, and ELO efforts address state goals.

States administer federal ELO funding streams, including the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, which at $1.1 billion for fiscal 2008 is the largest dedicated source of federal funding for ELOs, and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a non-dedicated funding stream with estimated federal expenditures of $1 billion in fiscal 2005 for school-age youth attending child care centers.[57] Other federal funding streams that support ELOs include Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grants, food and nutrition funds, Title I education funding, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Local and private investments are also an integral part of the ELO funding landscape.

21st CCLC and CCDF provide all states with a preexisting funding base to support state ELO quality. Each of these programs has a quality set-aside: a percentage of funds reserved for improving program quality. Federal law requires states to set aside a minimum of 4 percent of federal and state CCDF funds to improve child care quality and accessibility for low-income families. In 2004, states invested more than double the required amount—$920 million, or 10 percent of total CCDF funds—to improve program quality.[58] These investments in early childhood and school-age care often focus on promoting safe and healthy environments and providing professional development.[59]

State education agencies may designate up to 2 percent of 21st CCLC funds for peer review of grant applications and supervision of award-making to eligible organizations and up to 3 percent of funds to:[60]

- Monitor and evaluate programs and activities;
- Provide training, capacity-building, and technical assistance to grantees;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and activities; and
- Offer training and technical assistance to eligible grant applicants.

Some states coordinate CCDF and 21st CCLC quality set-asides to support broad-based ELO quality efforts at the state level.[61] As a case in point, **Missouri** uses funding from both sources to support the Missouri Afterschool Resource Center, which provides training, support services, and technical assistance to afterschool programs in the state.[62] By taking a systemic approach, states can make dollars invested in ELO quality efforts go further.

States can also incorporate quality set-asides into state ELO funding streams. For example, the **California** Department of Education can set aside 1.5 percent of funds appropriated for the After School Education and Safety Program to provide technical assistance, evaluation, and training services and to offer local assistance funds to support program improvement.[63] The importance of these types of set-asides has grown in recent years as state investments in ELOs have skyrocketed. Many states fund ELOs through dedicated funding streams, general funds, or departmental budgets. In fiscal year 2006, states budgeted at least $897 million for afterschool programs; this conservative estimate excludes funding for sports and tutoring programs as well as most non-dedicated funding streams in which afterschool programs were just one of a number of eligible expenses.[64]

How Much Do ELOs Cost?

Per-participant cost estimates for high quality ELOs vary widely, ranging from $449 to $7,160 per year.[65] Much of this variation can be attributed to differences in program characteristics, such as scale, location, and staffing patterns, as well as to methodological differences in costing studies, including sample sizes, how costs are calculated, whether in-kind resources are taken into account, and whether startup, operating, and system-building costs are included.[66] To get a better understanding of ELO program funding, consider the following high-profile examples:

- The **California** After School Education and Safety program, funded at $550 million and the largest state investment in ELOs in absolute terms, provides programs with $7.50 per participant per day for a three-hour per day program and requires a 1 to 3 local monetary or in-kind match. For a five-day-a-week elementary school program at 180 days per school year, this translates to $1,800 per year ($1,350 in state funding and $450 in match per year). California raised the state reimbursement rate from $4.90 to $7.50 per participant per day after policymakers determined that a higher reimbursement rate was needed to support high quality programs.
- **Kentucky**'s Extended Service School Initiative provides every school district in the state with funds to support students with academic difficulties. The per-participant cost averaged about $2,390 per participant per year and ranged from about $1,000 to about $4,220, among 10 sites studied during the 1999-2000 school year. Kentucky's Extended Service School programs offer extra instructional time outside regular school hours and can include afterschool or before-school programs, evening sessions, Saturday learning opportunities, summer programs, and intersession programs.[67]
- **New York**'s Advantage After School Programs receive $1,250 per student from state-administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding.[68] In addition to this funding, which stood at $28.2 million in 2007-08, programs receive support from school, community, and public-private partnerships. The initiative aims to provide quality youth development opportunities to school-age children and youth. Programs operate three hours per day for five days per week during the regular school year and may elect to operate during school breaks. Programs may also extend into the evening hours, particularly if serving older youth.
- Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), a nationally recognized afterschool and summer learning program staffed with certified teachers and tutors that serves nearly 12,000 students in 75 public and charter school sites in **Maryland**, **Massachusetts**, **Michigan**, and **New York**, has direct costs of $2,000 per student per year for its afterschool program and $2,000 per student per year for its six-week summer learning program.[69] BELL's indirect costs are 7 percent for administration and 5 percent for fundraising.[70]

Better quality ELOs mean improved student outcomes and higher returns on investment.

Although funding is a critical component for supporting state ELO quality infrastructure, the level of funding individual ELOs receive also has a direct impact on the quality of the services they can provide (see How Much Do ELOs Cost?). Both governors, as chief executives of their states, and chief state school officers, as heads of the agencies that administer the bulk of ELO dollars, have strong incentives to fund ELO quality. Better quality ELOs mean improved student outcomes and higher returns on investment.

Action 3: Set State ELO Goals and Program Standards

To build the foundation of an ELO quality system, states must define the goals they expect high quality ELOs to meet and articulate ELO program standards tied to these goals. ELO program standards describe the conditions that, if met, will enable programs to succeed in meeting state and program goals. ELO program standards serve as a model of ELO excellence, providing guidance to states on how to invest in and support ELOs, to new programs on how to effectively meet their goals, and to existing programs on how to address areas in need of improvement.

Too often, states neglect to clearly define the outcomes they expect from ELOs.

Too often, states neglect to clearly define the outcomes they expect from ELOs. Without an understanding of the challenges a state is seeking to address through ELOs, it is difficult to determine what ELOs should look like, how to support them, and how to hold them accountable. With a shared understanding of state goals for ELOs, on the other hand, a state can define a high quality ELO as one that effectively and efficiently meets state and program goals.

ELOs have roots in the fields of education, youth development, child care, and prevention. Consequently, states typically consider ELOs as a means to:

- **Support children's school success** as well as their broader intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and psychological development;
- **Assist working parents** by ensuring that their children have a safe and constructive place to be after school or during the summer; and
- **Keep communities strong** by generating school-community connections and preventing risky youth behaviors that involve crime, drugs, and sexual activity.

States face a challenge in developing ELO program standards because there is no one-size-fits-all ELO. Different ELO options are necessary to meet the varied needs and demands of students, families, and communities. Although all high quality ELOs will share certain features, other features will differ from program to program. For example, a high quality afterschool program focused on hands-on science learning will look different than a high quality summer program focused on civic awareness and community engagement. Similarly, features of high quality ELOs will vary according to participant age.

Given the great diversity in ELO programs, there are three approaches states can take to develop ELO program standards tied to state goals. First, they can create standards that are sufficiently broad-based so as to apply to most ELO programs. **North Carolina**'s standards, for example, describe a high quality ELO as one that "offers activities appropriate to the ages and skill levels of participants" and that "provides a variety of activities that reflect program mission." Second, states can narrow the scope of their standards to concentrate on a subset of programs. For example, **Michigan**'s standards focus on programs serving students in kindergarten through grade eight. Finally, states can take a modular approach, where certain standards apply to all programs and other stan-

dards vary according to program goals. **Massachusetts**' Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool uses different standards for programs focused on different academic subjects.

ELO program standards should be grounded in research on the features of high quality afterschool programs (see II. Features of High Quality ELOs). In **Massachusetts**, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, and the Massachusetts After-School Research Study collaborated to produce standards based on evidence-based ELO best practices consistent with desired program outcomes. In developing these standards, state partners reviewed research on afterschool, education, and the arts and gleaned perspectives from experts in these fields. By informing the development of its standards with information on research-based practices, Massachusetts was able to provide programs with a roadmap to quality that has proven effective.

To ease the development of ELO program standards, states should consider building on existing state or local efforts. For example, **Rhode Island** has adopted statewide quality standards, initially developed by the Providence Afterschool Alliance for local programs. **Illinois**, has explored adapting the goals and objectives of the Illinois Teen REACH afterschool program for wider use in the state.

States can also take advantage of a broad range of ELO program standards used beyond their own borders. At least 42 ELO quality standard documents and assessment tools are being used nationwide, according to a scan conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project and based, in part, on initial tracking undertaken by the Council of Chief State School Officers.[71] In **Michigan**, the state department of education, along with representatives from three school districts across the state, used diverse references to inform the development of the Michigan Model Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs, including standards published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale, and the National AfterSchool Association's Standards for Quality School-Age Care.[72]

Although only a handful of states have already developed state ELO program standards, a number of others are currently on the path to developing their own, including **Connecticut**, **Illinois**, **New Mexico**, and **South Carolina**.[73] This interest in developing state ELO program standards reflects the increasing importance state leaders see in providing ELOs with a blueprint they can follow to meet state goals in support of children, families, and communities.

Action 4: Measure ELO Performance

States should develop measures of ELO quality to determine whether programs are meeting policymaker expectations and to support ELO programs in their pursuit of excellence. There are two main aspects of ELO quality that states should measure: the extent to which programs meet state ELO program standards and the degree to which programs demonstrate results consistent with state and program goals.

States can develop assessment tools to measure how ELOs stack up against state quality standards. Currently, most state-developed ELO assessment tools are program self-assessments, which help ELOs improve their practices on an ongoing basis. For example, the **New York** State Afterschool Network's Quality Self-Assessment Tool uses a common set of quality standards to help programs assess, plan, design, and execute strategies for ongoing program improvement.[74] In **Massachusetts**, the Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT) helps programs evaluate how their practices compare with evidence-based best practices that are consistent with their expected program outcomes.[75] In both these states, 21st CCLCs are required to use these tools. Other states that have developed self-assessment tools include **Colorado**, **Missouri**, **New Hampshire**, which adapted the National Community Education Association's Continuous Improvement for Afterschool Programs tool, and **North Carolina**. The **Michigan** Department of Education is currently rolling out a customized version of High/Scope's Youth Program Quality Assessment tool that is focused on self-assessment and tied to the state's ELO program quality standards.[76] States could consider using similar tools for monitoring or accrediting programs.

There are two main aspects of ELO quality that states should measure: the extent to which programs meet state ELO program standards and the degree to which programs demonstrate results consistent with state and program goals.

Determining how well ELOs embody state program standards is critical, but other factors are equally important. States should also seek to measure the effects that programs have on participants. Ideally, states would also measure the effects that programs have on families and communities. Currently, this is an underdeveloped area in the realm of state ELO policy because of the difficulty of teasing out ELO program impacts from other influences. For example, it is difficult to determine how much of an increase in a student's test score is due to activities in school, in an ELO, or at home. Despite difficulties such as these, it is vital to adopt measures of program effects so that state governments can more fully evaluate the results of their ELO efforts and investments. The **Massachusetts** Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in cooperation with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, has taken the lead in developing a research-based ELO evaluation system called the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO).[77] SAYO uses brief pre- and post-participation surveys to track changes in participants' outcomes. Like Massachusetts' APT, programs have some choice regarding what outcomes they choose to measure, depending on their mission (see Guiding Principles for Measuring ELO Quality: The Massachusetts Approach).

States can collect, store, and analyze data to inform efforts to improve program quality.

States can collect, store, and analyze data to inform efforts to improve program quality. One approach states may take involves incorporating data on ELOs into existing education data systems. **Delaware**, for example, has developed a longitudinal education data system to track student achievement over time. The state recently built a Student Service Program Evaluation component into this data system to track the participation of individual students in 21st CCLC and SES. By combining student data on ELOs with school records and state achievement test data, Delaware plans to conduct a sophisticated analysis to investigate the impact of ELOs on student achievement over time. States may also consider linking ELO data to other state databases (e.g., health, juvenile justice, and social services). This would allow states to investigate the impact of ELOs on nonacademic outcomes, including those related to supporting working families and keeping children and youth safe and out of trouble.

Guiding Principles for Measuring ELO Quality: The Massachusetts Approach

A closer examination of SAYO and APT—Massachusetts' 21st CCLC quality measures—illuminates key principles that can help guide other state efforts to develop measures of ELO quality.

- **Target both sides of the quality equation.** APT measures ELO adherence to program standards and SAYO measures program impacts. Using both of these types of measurement tools provides Massachusetts with a more complete picture of ELO quality, balances the strengths and weaknesses of each measurement tool, and supports the dual goals of program improvement and accountability.
- **Create tools that adapt to different program types.** Both SAYO and APT use a "menu" approach to assessment, whereby programs have some choice regarding what measures will apply to them. With respect to areas of academic focus, for example, one program may select measures on reading and writing skills, whereas another may select measures on science and mathematics. This flexibility means SAYO and APT are adaptable to a wide variety of ELOs.
- **Focus on reasonable and research-based outcomes.** SAYO enables ELOs to assess changes in youth outcomes that are associated with participation in high quality ELOs and likely to occur in a single year. For example, SAYO measures "intermediary effects" (e.g., increases in student engagement, self-esteem, school attendance, and work-study habits) that serve as precursors to improved academic achievement, which may develop over longer periods.[78] APT, though it does not directly measure participant outcomes, measures program adherence to research-based best practices. In the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study, program quality as measured by APT was linked to improved program outcomes on SAYO.
- **Ensure that measures are statistically sound.** Both SAYO and APT went through extensive field-testing to ensure their validity and reliability for measuring change in elementary and middle school students. Sets of survey questions were tested to ensure they could be incorporated into scales that effectively captured the outcomes being measured.
- **Make use of multiple measures and sources of data.** SAYO collects data from regular education teachers, participants, and ELO staff on student academic achievement, homework completion, behavior, initiative, relationship development, program experiences, and engagement in learning, among other outcomes. Using multiple measures and multiple sources of data (e.g., participants, providers, parents, teachers, and trained observers) provides a more complete and balanced representation of program quality.

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time is working to expand the reach of SAYO and APT by offering them as part of an Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS).[79] **Georgia** is now piloting APAS in 15 sites.[80]

Action 5: Provide Incentives to Improve ELO Quality

States should provide incentives for programs to reach for higher levels of program quality. Increasingly, states are using quality rating systems and mechanisms that tie funding to program quality to spur ELOs to achieve excellence.

A Quality Rating System (QRS) rates ELOs according to whether they meet particular quality benchmarks or standards in an easy-to-understand manner (e.g., on a scale of one to five stars). These rating systems generally build on minimum requirements set out in state statute or regulations so that meeting these requirements means a program has met the first benchmark in the QRS (see Use Regulations to Set a Floor for Program Quality). A top rating in a QRS could be used to demonstrate that a program has met state ELO quality standards. At least 13 states have a QRS that applies to school-age youth in afterschool programs.[81] For example, Keystone STARS, the Pennsylvania QRS, groups programs into four levels (one, two, three, and four stars) depending on the research-based performance benchmarks that programs meet. The benchmarks relate to staff qualifications and professional development, curricula and assessment, partnerships with family and community, and leadership and management.[82] **Pennsylvania**, **Missouri**, and **Ohio** have been recognized as leaders in ensuring that their quality rating systems work well for ELOs, given that many of these systems were originally developed for early childhood care and education.[83]

> By rating ELOs on their quality and publicizing these ratings, states can provide consumers with solid information to inform their decisions.

By rating ELOs on their quality and publicizing these ratings, states can provide consumers with solid information to inform their decisions. Rating and reporting also provide programs with a compelling market-based reason to raise their quality level.

To ensure that relatively high quality programs are more likely to be funded than relatively low quality programs, states can structure state ELO funding streams as competitive grant programs. For example, "Lottery for Education: Afterschool Programs" is an ELO grant initiative supported by funds from unclaimed lottery winnings in **Tennessee**. Funded at $12.5 million in 2006, the program supports quality with a rigorous application process that requires a needs assessment, detailed project design information, data on performance measures, evidence of effective partnerships, and a well-formulated budget. For its first round of grants, the state funded 20 of the most promising projects out of 133 applications. In later rounds, high quality projects were granted continuation funds, even as new projects were awarded.

Beyond state-specific programs, states have considerable responsibility in administering federal 21st CCLC grants, which they can take advantage of to boost the quality of grantees. States manage 21st CCLC grant competitions, award grants to eligible entities, monitor programs to ensure that statutory requirements are being met, and develop performance indicators to measure and evaluate programs. In addition to these requirements, states are given some discretion to determine key aspects of the 21st CCLC program, including the amount and duration of grant awards, competitive priorities in state competitions beyond those required by federal law, and availability of technical assistance for eligible applicants. The ability to structure the state competitive awards process for 21st CCLC gives states the opportunity to maximize the quality of programs that are ultimately funded.

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States can provide programs with another powerful incentive to raise their quality levels by tying higher levels of ELO program funding to improved quality. States can, for instance, use tiered reimbursement systems to provide higher rates of reimbursements to higher-quality afterschool programs. In Pennsylvania, for example, programs that serve low-income children through the state's subsidized child care program can earn higher reimbursement rates by scoring higher ratings on the Keystone STARS Quality Rating and Improvement System; as of fiscal 2008–09, compared with one-star programs, two-star programs receive an extra $0.50 per day for each full-time enrolled child, three-star programs receive an extra $1.50, and four-star programs receive an extra $2.00.[87] Pennsylvania also provides additional financial awards to eligible programs to help them improve program quality and to raise education and retention rates of key program staff. For more information on Keystone STARS, please see: http://www.pakeys.org/stars.

At least 30 states have a tiered reimbursement system, and all but a few of them include school-age care programs in their system.[88] However, these systems typically apply only to programs funded with child care dollars, not to other school- or community-based ELOs. Moreover, many tiered reimbursement systems focus on structural issues, such as staff qualifications, and fail to take student outcomes into account.

Use Regulations to Set a Floor for Program Quality

States should set and enforce basic requirements that all ELOs must meet. In the child care field, these basic requirements are incorporated into licensing regulations, typically focused on ensuring participant health and safety. All states have child care licensing regulations, covering areas such as physical environment, child-staff ratios, staff qualifications, and basic procedural requirements.[84] A number of states have made changes to their licensing regulations, which originally may have been crafted to support early childhood care, to make them relevant for ELOs. For example, **South Dakota** updated its child care regulations to recognize school building codes and construction rules so that school-based ELOs would not need to submit floor plans to child care agencies before receiving a license.[85] **Massachusetts**, **Oklahoma**, and **Pennsylvania** allow program administrators of licensed school-age care facilities to hold degrees in elementary or secondary education, or other relevant disciplines, as opposed to early childhood education.[86]

States should establish minimum quality regulations for other federal and state ELO programs. Supplemental Educational Services (SES), for example, provides tutoring services to eligible students in Title I schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for three years. States are responsible for determining what providers are eligible to provide SES, and they can structure and refine the application process to help ensure that only providers meeting established criteria related to quality services are approved. **California**'s Afterschool Education and Safety program provides an example of minimum quality regulations for a state ELO funding stream. Under that program:

- All staff members who directly supervise participants must meet the minimum qualifications, hiring requirements, and procedures for an instructional aide in the school district;
- The maximum participant-to-staff member ratio is 20 to 1;
- Participants must receive a daily nutritious snack; and
- Programs must operate every regular school day until 6:00 p.m. and a minimum of 15 hours per week.

Meeting basic requirements is necessary for ELOs to be effective, but by no means sufficient.

Meeting basic requirements is necessary for ELOs to be effective, but by no means sufficient. Consequently, states must develop and implement policies that provide incentives for improved quality.

As states and ELOs increase their abilities to measure the impact of ELOs, states should consider ways to reward programs that show positive results. For example, states could require that programs demonstrate positive effects on student outcomes in order to reach the highest levels of quality rating and tiered reimbursement systems. Similarly, states could require ELOs receiving funding via a competitive grant program to submit evidence of their direct impact on children, families, and communities. States could use this information to reward successful programs with, for example, continuation grants. They could also provide struggling programs with additional supports to improve quality and withdraw certification or funding from consistently low quality programs.

Action 6: Support a Strong ELO Workforce

ELO quality rests on the strength of the individuals working in the programs. ELOs are typically staffed by some mix of teachers, youth workers, hourly staff, and volunteers. Because of the part-time, often voluntary, nature of much of the ELO workforce, fostering quality is a formidable task. To support a strong ELO workforce, states can help recruit talented individuals into the field, provide professional development to staff members, and retain strong staff members.

Use Innovative Approaches to Recruit Talented Individuals

States can help recruit talented frontline staff into the ELO field by making ELO staffing a part of state community service and service learning programs. In **Massachusetts**, for example, Governor Deval Patrick worked with legislative leaders to create the Commonwealth Corps, a group of volunteers who earn a modest stipend and commit to a year of full-time or part-time community service activities, including service to afterschool and mentorship programs.[89] In **Maryland**, all students must participate in community service as a high school graduation requirement. Several Maryland school districts allow older students to earn their community service credits serving as tutors for younger students in afterschool programs.[90] In all states, governor-appointed state service commissions manage, monitor, evaluate, and provide corporation funding to state AmeriCorps programs.[91] These commissions can ensure that high quality ELOs are included as organizations eligible to receive AmeriCorps grants, and, more broadly, can encourage volunteering in support of high quality ELOs in their state.

States can also help ELOs farm two- and four-year colleges and universities for talented undergraduates who are looking for part-time nonprofessional employment, a rich work experience, and the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the lives of children and youth. For example, states can support the inclusion of high quality ELOs as eligible employers in state and federal work-study programs and in teaching fellows programs. For example, college engineering students could be encouraged to work part-time in ELOs that help high school students learn the fundamentals of mechanical and electrical engineering through robotics competitions. Imagine college students on a teaching career path who earn both money and real-world teaching experience tutoring students at ELOs. This is happening in Fresno County, **California**, where local college students aspiring to be teachers are recruited, trained, and placed in afterschool programs for a minimum of 15 hours per week as teaching fellows. The college students, who must maintain a 3.0 grade point average, receive a living stipend, ongoing training, and college credit for related coursework.[92]

States can support the development of ELO program leadership through partnerships with higher education institutions. In **Massachusetts**, for example, Lesley University partnered with Citizen Schools, a local program provider, to develop a master's program that grants degrees in education with a specialization in out-of-school time. Through higher education governance structures, states can ensure that sufficient capacity exists to train leaders for the growing ELO field. To make a career as a leader in the ELO field more attractive, states can extend programs traditionally aimed at school teachers to cover ELO program coor-

dinators. For example, states can provide scholarships, college loan forgiveness, and other incentives (e.g., new home buying tax credits) to individuals who pursue a career in ELO management and remain in that profession, serving high-need populations, for a given amount of time.

Provide Professional Development Opportunities

To help ELOs reach higher quality levels, states can support the availability of regular professional development opportunities for program staff. Building on insights from early childhood care and education, *Building Professional Development Systems for the Afterschool Field*, an Afterschool Investments Project report published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care Bureau, provides a road map for how states can support ELO professional development:[93]

- **States can provide funding and develop incentives to support ELO staff professional development.** For example, seven states have incorporated afterschool providers into their versions of the TEACH Early Childhood Project, which provides scholarships to child care providers and rewards staff members who boost their education with increased wages or a stipend. States can also incorporate programs' professional development activities as an indicator in quality rating and tiered reimbursement systems. Most funding for professional development system building comes from Child Care and Development Fund dollars.

- **To create a framework for professional development activities, states can establish core knowledge and competencies** that delineate what afterschool workers should know and be able to do. For example, **Kansas** and **Missouri** worked together to develop the Kansas and Missouri Core Competencies for Youth Development Professionals, which covers knowledge regarding how children and youth learn and develop, how to establish appropriate learning environments and curricula, and how to establish and maintain a healthy and safe environment for participants. Minnesota has also developed core competencies, along with a career lattice for afterschool workers. States can use "career lattices" to link providers' levels of experience, education, and training to various positions and compensation levels.

- **States can also create credentials that provide a means for afterschool workers to gain recognition for their professional development training.** As a case in point, **Connecticut** has created a Credential in After School Education for individuals who specialize in the care and education of children, ages 5 to 15, during out-of-school time. To earn the credential, afterschool workers must pass four online courses offered by a state college, document that they have received 240 hours of experience in afterschool education, submit a professional resource file, and complete a field experience course.

- **To make it easier for ELO workers to access trainings, states can provide a one-stop shop for accessing information on professional development offerings,** and they can make use of regional technical assistance structures to enhance outreach. **Ohio**'s professional development registry is a good example of a statewide ELO training clearinghouse, which also allows trainees to track their progress as they participate in trainings. **North Carolina** provides an example of a state that uses regional training specialists who design and deliver trainings keyed to local needs and collaborate with public school systems to provide professional development for individuals working in school-based programs.

- **To guarantee the quality of the trainings, states can certify instructors.** In **Pennsylvania**, for example, to be listed in its catalog of certified instructors, individuals must receive training on the components of the state's professional development system, techniques to effectively foster adult learning, and methods for aligning courses with the state's core body of knowledge for school age care professionals.[94]

Given the overlap between professional development for afterschool workers and regular school-day staff, states can offer guidance for programs on working closely with schools and school districts. States can also create an integrated system of professional development that addresses both ELO and school-day staff.[95] In supporting professional development for ELO staff, states should take into account lessons learned from research on professional development for regular school-day staff.

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Furthermore, states can target program areas identified by evaluation as weak or needing improvement and partner with other organizations and agencies to increase the state's capacity to support effective professional development.[96]

Action 7: Connect Students with High Quality ELOs

States cannot reap the full benefits of high quality ELOs if programs are unavailable to those who need them. Gaps in availability persist, particularly for low-income and minority families that have a harder time accessing high quality programs in their communities. Nationally, more than 14 million children take care of themselves after the school day ends, including almost 4 million middle school students.[97]

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Low-income and minority students face particular obstacles, as about two-thirds of their parents report finding it difficult to find high quality ELOs.[98] To connect students with high quality ELOs, states can analyze ELO supply and demand, target investments in high quality ELOs to underserved populations, and inform parents and students of high quality ELOs.

Perform an ELO Supply and Demand Analysis

States can conduct an ELO supply and demand analysis to determine which students are participating in high quality ELOs, which students are participating in lower quality ELOs, and which students are doing without. States typically have access to information on ELO supply from the state education agency, which compiles information on 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other ELO programs, and state child care offices or child care resource and referral agencies, which compile data on licensed child care centers that serve school-age children.[99] However, this information provides an incomplete picture of ELO supply, given that many programs are funded with private or local dollars. Similarly, although states have some information on demand thanks to program waiting lists and routine collections of demographic data, this data may be insufficient. Because of these issues, states may collect additional data via provider and parent surveys. **Montana**, for example, compiled data from its state education agency, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count publication, a telephone survey of licensed school-age care centers, and a telephone survey of state-level youth organizations and local informants.[100] Using data from its analysis, Montana generated county-by-county maps that show the percentage of school-age children with working parents participating in ELOs.[101]

For supply and demand analyses to be most beneficial, however, they should incorporate information on the quality of the ELO supply. By linking a supply and demand analysis with a quality rating system or other method of measuring afterschool quality, states can determine unmet need and target resources to improve program quality or increase program access accordingly.

Few, if any, states have incorporated comprehensive measures of quality into their ELO supply and demand studies. In **Pennsylvania**, however, the statewide afterschool network has had preliminary discussions on creating a state ELO data system that would track information on ELO availability, use, and quality and link to the state's broader education data system. By analyzing the demand for ELOs and the supply of high quality ELOs in a periodic or ongoing manner, such a state system would provide data to support smart investments in ELOs.

Target Investments in High quality ELOs to Underserved Populations

Given budget limitations, most states are targeting underserved populations so that scarce resources can do the most good. Some states are approaching this issue by supporting ELOs for students, schools, and districts that are facing academic challenges. For example, **Connecticut**'s Priority Extended School Hours Grant awards funds for ELOs—$3 million in 2006-07—to districts with poor student performance on state exams, high levels of welfare receipt, or large populations.[102] **Illinois**' Summer Bridges program, a summer reading and writing program for students in prekindergarten through grade six-budgeted at $22 million in 2007—directs support to students who do not meet state reading standards and who attend school in a district where at least one school has 50 percent or more of its students failing to meet these standards.[103]

Beyond providing funding specifically for ELOs, states can include high quality ELOs as allowable expenses under more flexible funding streams. Consider **New York**'s Contracts for Excellence, as an example.[104] Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, school districts that had underperforming schools and that received a 10 percent or $15 million increase in state funding had to develop specific plans to use these new funds to improve student

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performance. These plans, embodied in Contracts for Excellence, had to focus on reforms proven to increase student achievement, such as academic ELOs, smaller class sizes, or prekindergarten. Similarly, **Oregon** provided school districts with $260 million in new funding for the 2007-09 biennium to be spent on activities to improve student achievement, including ELOs, teacher professional development, and literacy programs.[105] The **North Carolina** Disadvantaged Student Supplemental Fund is another flexible funding stream that can be used to support ELOs. This fund, which allotted $69 million to local education agencies in 2007-08, provides funding according to the number of district students who are from low-income families, live in single-parent households, or have at least one parent with less than a high school diploma.[106] Incorporating high quality ELOs as allowable expenses under flexible funding streams highlights the positive impact these initiatives can have and makes them a more integral part of state and local education systems.

States can also tap funding from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to provide afterschool programming to students of eligible families. Although funds available for afterschool programming vary based on general demand (i.e., applications) for TANF funds, the funding requirements for TANF help ensure that children with the greatest need are being served. TANF funds can be transferred to a state's Child Care and Development Fund or used to directly fund programs. **Georgia**, for instance, has allocated $14 million in TANF funds to support ELOs, including both afterschool and summer learning programs, focused on youth development. **Ohio** has allocated $10 million per year in TANF money for afterschool for 2008 and 2009. **Louisiana** uses TANF funds to support ELOs, many of which are operated by community- and faith-based organizations. The state department of education administers Louisiana's TANF funds for ELOs, which were allocated at $12.5 million for fiscal 2007.

Several states are focusing on ELOs for older youth because this population is typically underserved in the field. The percentage of children taking care of themselves at least once per week after school jumps from 2 percent in grades K-2, to 7 percent in grades 3-5, and 27 percent in grades 6-8.[107] The lack of structured activities for many middle school students may help explain why U.S. students' academic performance tends to fall off in the middle grades. Consequently, states are investing in ELOs for youth in middle and high school. For example, **Colorado**'s dropout prevention activity grant fund supports before-school and afterschool arts-based and vocational programs for students in middle and high school. Middle and high schools that received a "low" or "unsatisfactory" rating in the state's system are eligible for the program. Supported with $400,000 in state funding in 2008, the **Kansas** Middle School Afterschool Activity Advancement Grant funds afterschool and summer programs that provide middle school youth with age-appropriate physical activity, academic enhancement, and career and higher learning opportunities. **California** is helping to lead the charge in support of ELOs for high school students with its After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens (ASSETs) Program. Having invested substantial state funding in afterschool for grades K-8, the state education agency directed $43 million in 21st CCLC funding to ASSETS for the 2007-08 school year.[108] A recent evaluation of ASSETs found that program participants passed the English and mathematics portions of the state's high school exit exam at a higher rate than similar students not involved in the program.[109]

Inform Parents and Students of High Quality ELOs

Several states are focusing on ELOs for older youth because this population is typically underserved in the field.

To increase the demand for quality ELOs and to address information gaps, states can provide parents and students with information on the features and benefits of high quality ELOs and on the availability of high quality ELOs in their communities. State Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) networks, present in 38 states, are one means of accomplishing these goals.[110] The **Minnesota** CCR&R network, for example, helps match families with high quality ELOs and informs state residents of the importance of high quality ELOs through a variety of outreach and communication mechanisms.[111] There are, of course, other vehicles for informing parents and students of available ELOs. **New Jersey** has developed a free and easy-to-use online directory of ELOs statewide, with $450,000 in funding from a local energy company and leadership from a statewide public-private ELO partnership.[112] The directory, available in both English and Spanish at www.njafterschool.org, allows families to easily find ELOs and providers to easily add and edit listings of their programs. Parents and students can search among the 2,000 listed programs by location, program activities, ages served, schedule, and cost. Efforts like these are critical to ensure that information about program opportunities reaches all families, including those in low-income communities, and that families understand the benefits of high quality ELOs.

States can also support action at the local level that connects students with community supports to facilitate student success. For example, since 1990, **Kentucky** has funded Family Resource and Youth Services Centers to help families and children find local solutions to problems that interfere with student learning.[113] ELOs are a core component of the centers for children ages 4-12, as is career exploration and development for older youth. The centers may provide ELOs directly, contract with local providers, or serve as a liaison to community programs. Funded at $55.6 million in fiscal 2008, the 820 centers across the state serve 1,166 schools, with an enrollment of 612,741 students. In **Georgia**, Governor Sonny Perdue has championed an initiative, funded at $53 million in fiscal 2009, that puts "graduation coaches" into middle and high schools. The graduation coaches identify students at risk of dropping out, work with these students to create a plan for graduating successfully, and connect the students with community resources, such as ELOs, that can help them meet their academic and life goals. To support their efforts to connect youth with community resources, graduation coaches partner with volunteer business leaders across the state, called "community coaches." Although not focused on ELOs alone, Georgia's use of graduation and community coaches provides a strong example of how states can help students get access to the supports they need for success.

IV. Next Steps

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State leaders recognize that afterschool, summer learning programs, and other ELOs hold great promise for addressing a range of state policy challenges. ELOs can help prepare youth for college and career, support working families, and keep communities strong. It is because of this promise that states have ramped up investment in ELOs to boost the availability of these programs, particularly among low income and minority youth who have historically lacked equal access to such opportunities.

Recent research has confirmed the immense potential of ELOs while simultaneously highlighting the need to support ELO quality. Participation in high quality ELOs is linked to substantial improvements in academic achievement, school attendance, student engagement, work-study habits, and social and emotional development. Attending a low quality program, however, can have negative effects. Consequently, it is imperative for state policymakers to invest in ELO quality.

Fortunately, it is now clear what makes an effective ELO. Also, states have begun to develop promising policies and practices that support ELO quality and offer lessons learned. For example, states can look to **North Carolina** for ELO program standards, **Massachusetts** for measures of ELO quality, **Pennsylvania** for a strong quality rating system, **Kansas** and **Missouri** for core competencies for professional development, and **California** for methods of bringing high quality ELOs to scale.

With this knowledge, governors and chief state school officers can establish a state ELO quality system. To create a comprehensive system, state leaders can convene an ELO quality team and empower that team to set state goals for ELOs along with program standards and measures of ELO quality. Furthermore, governors and chief state school officers can work with their ELO quality teams to champion policies that support a strong ELO workforce, provide incentives to improve ELO quality, and connect students with high quality ELOs.

By ratcheting up disparate, oftentimes disconnected ELO quality efforts, state leaders who establish well-functioning state ELO quality systems can expect substantially higher returns on their investments in ELOs. More profoundly, by making good on the promise of ELOs, chief state school officers and governors can help ensure the success of children, families, and communities in their states.

Notes

[1] A broader definition of ELO, which includes extended day and year initiatives, distance learning, and early childhood education initiatives, is included in the Council's policy statement on extended learning opportunities. However, these types of initiatives are beyond the scope of this report which focuses solely on programs serving school-age youth and occurring outside the context of the regular school day.

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