CCSSO

Council of Chief State School Officers

CONNECTING HIGH-QUALITY
EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
AND THE
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS
TO ADVANCE STUDENT SUCCESS

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BACKGROUND

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. CCSSO seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Since 1998, CCSSO has focused attention on expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) and worked to develop a shared understanding about characteristics of high-quality ELOs and effective state policies and initiatives that support such programs. The work aims at fostering collective action among and providing technical assistance to state education agencies (SEAs), with particular attention given to SEA involvement with statewide afterschool networks to facilitate improvement in both the quality and quantity of expanded learning opportunities.

Common Core State Standards

Over the past two years, in collaboration with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), CCSSO facilitated the development of Common Core State Standards (Common Core) for grades K–12 in English/language arts and mathematics. A variety of stakeholders, including state representatives, content experts, teachers, school administrators, parents, and others, participated in this voluntary, state-led effort. The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning to prepare America's children for success in college and work. To date, more than 40 states have fully adopted the Common Core (http://www.corestandards.org/).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief explores ways to strengthen expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) by building their connection to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (Common Core). The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is interested in both efforts and wants to support states in maximizing their impact to ensure the success of all learners.

Without exception, states are attempting to improve the education of their students. These efforts are in response to: (1) persistent disparities in high school graduation rates that hinder our students' ability to compete in today's global economy; (2) gaps in preparedness, as many U.S. students who graduate from high school are not ready to do college-level work and/or join the workforce; and (3) conclusive evidence that U.S. high school students' academic performance lags behind that of their peers in other developed nations.

In 1998, CCSSO became actively involved with ELOs by engaging in research and development activities to promote high-quality programs that support young people in a variety of ways. ELO initiatives provide safe, structured learning and developmental opportunities for students outside of the regular school day. They include before- and after-school programs; weekend, vacation, and summer programs; extended-day and -year initiatives; digital learning; and early education initiatives. A solid and growing body of literature shows that high-quality ELOs are correlated with student gains in academic achievement, school engagement, and social and emotional development.

Over the past two years, CCSSO engaged in work on the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) in English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics (math). Along with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and others, CCSSO developed the Common Core to provide teachers, parents, students, and other education stakeholders a shared understanding of what students are expected to learn, no matter where they live or how often they move. With more than 40 states having adopted the Common Core State Standards, the Common Core will be the key driver of states' efforts to transform their education

> **Without exception, states are attempting to improve the education of their students.**

systems to ensure all students graduate ready for college and career.

While most high-quality, school-based or school-linked ELOs already align with the capacities and practices that underlie the Common Core, typically these connections tend to be implicit. Few places have yet found ways to elevate the connections from implicit to explicit and to strongly connect the learning targets in ELOs to the academic content and skills in the Common Core.

In 2009, to support state leaders with the work of ensuring high-quality ELOs, CCSSO and the NGA Center published *The Quality Imperative: A State Guide*

to Achieving the Promise of Extended Learning Opportunities.[1] *The Quality Imperative* includes action steps that can be used as guidance for ELOs to connect with the Common Core. This brief emphasizes the most pertinent actions and looks at examples of emerging state policies, practices, and programs that support connections between ELOs and the Common Core.

THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

The reality today is that too many students are graduating high school unprepared for success in college or the workplace. An increasing number of individuals are unable to successfully compete for the highly skilled jobs or the shrinking pool of unskilled jobs that pay a living wage.

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Tough Realities

- As of 2005, among individuals ages 16 to 24, six percent of whites were high school dropouts, compared with 10 percent of blacks and 22 percent of Latinos.[3]

- High school students based in the country's 50 largest cities are significantly less likely to graduate than those based in towns, rural communities, and suburbs.[4]

- Only 65 percent of low-income students graduate from high school as compared with 91 percent of their peers from middle- and upper-income families.[5]

Furthermore, many students who do graduate from high school do so without the skills and knowledge needed for postsecondary education and workplace success.

- Forty-three percent of all students enrolled at public two-year institutions and 29 percent of all students enrolled in four-year institutions have enrolled in remedial courses. Students who do take remedial courses, especially in reading, are less likely to earn an associate's or bachelor's degree.[6]

- Four out of five students requiring remediation in college had high school grade point averages of 3.0 or higher and describe themselves as good students who completed assignments regularly.[7]

- Forty percent of employers rated high school graduates as "deficient" in their overall preparedness for entry-level jobs. High school graduates were considered to be lacking in basic and applied skills (e.g., professionalism, critical thinking, and problem solving) necessary for success in the workplace.[8]

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about two-thirds as much as a high school graduate and only about one-third as much as their peers with a college degree. Although the percentage varies significantly by race, ethnicity, income, and geography,[2] the stark fact is that more than one-fourth of American children do not finish high school.

Finally, on the aggregate, American students are falling behind their international peers. Recently released data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that, in comparison to their peers in 34 industrialized nations, American 15-year-olds rank 14th overall in reading literacy, 17th in science, and 25th in mathematics.[9]

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE

While states are engaged in a variety of efforts intended to reverse these trends, the Common Core State Standards initiative (Common Core) stands out as particularly promising and likely to drive the U.S. reform agenda for the next decade and beyond.

The Common Core initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). The Common Core spans Kindergarten through grade 12 in two content areas: English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics (math). The standards define the knowledge and skills students should have so they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. To date, more than 40 states have adopted the Common Core.

The Common Core seeks to accelerate progress in American schools by setting rigorous expectations, pegged to the highest-achieving states and countries. In addition to being high and rigorous, the standards also aim to provide more clarity and focus for teachers, parents, and students regarding what students should know and be able to do in each grade and by high school graduation.

Standards that span state lines have additional benefits. To begin, common standards will minimize repetition, gaps, and disruptions for students who move, especially for those who move frequently. Shared standards also lend themselves to joint resources and to maximizing resource impact. As the Common Core is implemented, state education agencies (SEAs) and school districts will benefit from sharing resources to reduce costs and be able to re-deploy savings in other ways that boost student learning and achievement.

Fostering Habits of Mind

The introductions to both the ELA and math Common Core standards include descriptions of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that operate in tandem with the academic content in the standards. These "habits of mind" offer a portrait of students who, upon graduation, are prepared for college, career, and citizenship. These cognitive and psychological aptitudes are described in the ELA standards as "capacities" and in the math standards as "practices." Although they are not easily assessed, these abilities are extremely important to the development of the assets individuals need to be successful in a rapidly-changing global economy.[10]

Implementation of the Common Core

Numerous implementation efforts are underway, and many are yet to begin. In addition to the various state-led efforts, there is an array of philanthropy-supported initiatives. These include the Common Core Curriculum Maps for English language arts; the Illustrative Mathematics Project, a project to illustrate each of the math standards with sample problems and tasks; and the Learning Progressions Documents for the Common Core Mathematics Standards. Also, two groups of states are developing common assessments tied to the Common Core State Standards (http://www.k12.wa.us/smarter/ and http://www.achieve.org/PARCC). The new common assessment systems will include online tools and resources for teachers to help them check in on student progress and make

Common Core State Standards "Habits of Mind"

English/Language Arts Capacities
As students advance through the grades and master the standards in reading, writing, listening, and language, they should be able to exhibit with increasing fullness and regularity these capacities of the literate individual:

1. They demonstrate independence.

2. They build strong content knowledge.

3. They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.

4. They comprehend as well as critique.

5. They value evidence.

6. They use technology and digital media strategically and capably.

7. They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

Mathematical Practices
For students to succeed, they must increasingly develop varieties of expertise at all levels in the following ways:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.

3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

4. Model with mathematics.

5. Use appropriate tools strategically.

6. Attend to precision.

7. Look for and make use of structure.

8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

appropriate adjustments in their teaching throughout the school year.

In addition, CCSSO recently launched the Implementing the Common Core System (ICCS) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS). Within CCSSO's system of SCASS projects this new ICCS SCASS has been developed to help state education agencies develop a systems approach to making effective changes to help students meet these new

> **This initiative represents an unprecedented alignment of federal, philanthropic, and public will.**

standards. State teams of SEA leaders participating in the ICCS SCASS will meet in person three times throughout the year drawing on the work of CCSSO to support their Common Core implementation. Teams will also have biweekly meetings and webinars led by an identified coaching staff that will serve as advisors. These individuals include Dr. Doug Christensen, former Nebraska Commissioner of Education;

Dr. Rick Melmer, former South Dakota Secretary of Education; Susan Gendron, former Maine Commissioner of Education; Gavin Payne, former California Chief Deputy Superintendent; and Robert Fuller, a systems change specialist. The lead advisor is Dr. Daniel H. Kim, who has worked with a wide

range of organizations to help them with systems change and to translate theory into relevant practice.

Although it is too soon to know the effects of the Common Core on student achievement, hopes are high. This initiative represents an unprecedented alignment of federal, philanthropic, and public will that bode well for this state-led effort.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF EXPANDED LEARNING OPPPORTUNITIES

School-based and school-linked ELOs are a proven ally in the effort to improve student achievement. High-quality opportunities to learn beyond the traditional school day provide safe, structured environments for students of all ages to engage with peers and caring, competent adults in the community and the digital world. Programs that are held before and after school, on weekends and during the summer, and opportunities such as service learning, mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, dual enrollment in college, virtual learning, and early childhood education all offer paths for young people to engage in learning in meaningful ways. While programmatic goals vary depending on the ELO, they usually relate to some combination of increased academic success, character education and civic engagement, social and emotional development, and wellness and nutrition, among other developmental assets.

Particularly during the past decade, the education community has increasingly come to understand the vital role high-quality ELOs play in achieving positive outcomes for students. Spurred in part by the realization that the traditional school day and year are outmoded for today's learners, especially those who are far behind their grade-level peers, many states, philanthropic entities, and community organizations

have increased their funding for and attention to ELOs.

For over ten years the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has funded the development of statewide afterschool networks with the goal of fostering systems and policies that increase quality school-based or school-linked afterschool programs. Thirty-nine states now have active statewide afterschool networks supported by the Mott Foundation. CCSSO supports these networks through its participation in the Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC). ATAC is a group of national organizations and technical experts, including the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA), the National League of Cities (NLC), the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the Afterschool Alliance, The Finance Project, AIR/Learning Point Associates, and The College of Charleston, that offer a range of targeted technical assistance in building statewide afterschool networks.

In addition, the research suggests that programs like these can be a wise educational investment. As Priscilla Little of the Harvard Family Research Project has observed,

The research warrant for afterschool and summer learning programs is clear: Children and youth who participate in well-implemented programs and activities outside of school are poised to stay enrolled longer and perform better in school than their peers who do not attend such programs.[11]

Drawing from an increasingly substantial research base, *The Quality Imperative*

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identifies seven key elements that lead to high-quality ELOs:

1. A clear programmatic mission, focused and challenging goals, and frequent evaluation that supports ongoing improvement.

2. An array of content-rich programming that engages participants and builds their academic and nonacademic skills.

3. Positive, constructive relationships between staff and participants.

4. Strong connections with schools, families, and communities.

5. Qualified, well-supported, and stable program staff.

6. A low participant-to-staff ratio and an appropriate total enrollment.

7. Sufficient program resources and the ability to sustain funding over the long term.

When these quality elements are not in place, ELOs have been shown to make little positive impact.[12] When they are in place, ELOs are highly correlated with behaviors linked to academic success that result in increases in student achievement and graduation rates.

Improving Student Achievement

Research correlates high-quality ELOs to behaviors and dispositions that lead to increased achievement at every grade band.

For example, the *Study of Promising Afterschool Programs* found that 70 percent of elementary students participating in high-quality ELOs experienced increases in math scores

as compared with students who did not participate.[13] During the middle grades, an evaluation of The Afterschool Corporation's (TASC) afterschool initiatives found middle school students who participated in TASC initiatives

accumulated more high school credits in the ninth grade than their peers who did not.[14] It also found that participants passed more New York State Regents exams and earned more high school credits than nonparticipants. At the high school level, an evaluation of California's After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens (ASSETs) Program, which included 27,900 ethnically diverse high school students, found that participants passed the state's high school exit exam at significantly higher rates than nonparticipants.[15] Additionally, an evaluation of high school ELOs conducted by the American Youth Policy Forum found that 14 of 22 programs increased levels of academic success.[16]

Increasing Graduation Rates

Students who participate in high-quality ELOs graduate at higher rates than their peers. For example, a study of Chicago's Afterschool Matters

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program concluded that students who participated in an ELO for three or more semesters graduated from high school at higher rates than nonparticipants.[17] High-quality ELOs offer struggling high school students opportunities to receive additional support related to their current coursework and the possibility of recovering and accumulating credits beyond the regular day. For those students who are ready for the challenge, ELOs also offer ways to enrich and accelerate the school curriculum.

Additionally, high-quality ELOs help address the challenges associated with the approximately 47 percent of dropouts who report leaving school because they find it unchallenging or less important to them than other options.[18] High-quality ELOs can help keep these students in school by increasing their engagement and sense of belonging, providing opportunities for voice and leadership, improving attendance and behavior, cultivating work-study habits, and building stronger connections among families, schools, and communities.[19]

Addressing Issues of Equity

ELOs have particular importance for students from low-income families who, on average, are farther behind academically and have less access to additional learning opportunities than their more affluent peers.[20] The stark contrast between students who live below the poverty line and those who live well above it can be seen by comparing how much the first group forgets and the second group learns over the summer. A study by Karl Alexander of Johns Hopkins University shows that low-income students lose more ground in reading over the summer compared to higher-income students.[21] What's more, the National Summer Learning Association concludes that "the literature is clear and compelling about the fact that summer is a season of huge risks and setbacks for low-income youth in the United States."[22] Participation in summertime ELOs can provide an antidote to perpetuating and

exacerbating achievement gaps related to summer learning loss.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONNECTING ELOs AND THE COMMON CORE

Although the Common Core is, essentially, a policy document and thus completely different than the rich collection of programs and initiatives that comprise high-quality ELOs, there exists a strong and clear shared mission between the two. Both exist for the express purpose of increasing student achievement and to prepare students for success in college and a career after high school. As education systems across the country gear up to implement the Common Core, ELOs have an opportunity to strengthen their connections to that work in ways that support their program goals and promote success for young people.

The following section examines the linkages between ELOs and the Common Core with an eye toward strengthening those connections.

Implicit Connections Between ELOs and the Common Core

Most ELO programs broadly and implicitly identify with at least some of the English/language arts capacities and mathematics practices presented earlier in this brief, but few programs focus on them with clarity and specificity in their objectives and practice. For example, an ELO with a goal of building tolerance clearly connects to the ELA capacity related to understanding perspectives and cultures. The program will better be able to support its learners if it can answer questions like, "How does the program define tolerance?" and "How can student progress on that continuum be measured?" ELOs that have a deep understanding of student targets that apply during the traditional school day are better positioned to build on what happens during the

school day and to contribute to students' overall success.

There are compelling reasons to identify and make these linkages explicit. First, as suggested, the identification process itself elevates attention and increases the likelihood that students will achieve. Second, clarifying those connections

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allows ELOs to enhance the connections. There may be small adjustments to an ELO program that do not compromise its richness but allow it to better support student success.

In addition to ELOs that link to the ELA capacities and math practices, many ELOs can draw a direct line to the academic content and skills standards in the Common Core. These are the connections

that should be made clear. The amount of programmatic variation makes it difficult to draw generalized connections between particular standards and ELOs. Still, an ELO that provides a forum for youth to actively engage in challenging academic material probably includes content that is part of the Common Core. For example, afterschool robotics programs align directly with math content, and drama clubs provide authentic opportunities to explore literature.

High-Quality ELO Systems: What States Can Do to Connect to the Common Core

State leaders can take several key actions to develop a high-quality ELO system that increases linkages with the Common Core State Standards.

Set State ELO Goals and Program Standards

The Quality Imperative argues, "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."

With the Common Core now in place, states have the opportunity to revise or create ELO program standards to include addressing the content and capacities articulated in the Common

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Core. Doing so will better align what students are learning during and outside the school day, and enable educators and ELO providers to work

together in advancing overall student success.

Furthermore, as states look at various ways to capture high school credits (e.g., virtual learning, service learning, credit recovery), they can ensure that those credit-bearing opportunities are as rigorous as traditional ones.

Measure ELO Performance

States have traditionally been responsible for monitoring program effectiveness and are typically comfortable and effective in this role. Even without ELO program standards, regular state evaluations can determine the impact of ELO program participation on student achievement, graduation rates, college persistence rates, and workforce skills attainment. While these broad-stroke correlations are useful, they have limited value when it comes to program improvement.

For those states and statewide afterschool networks with ELO program standards, it becomes possible to measure ELO performance against those standards and to target program improvement efforts based on data. This means having data that tie directly to progress measured against a program's indicators of success, and it means putting those data into the hands of ELO program directors. When states find ways to judiciously collect and share data, they go beyond monitoring and begin to advance a system of support for learning.

This is now easier than it has ever been. According to the Data Quality Campaign,[23] 34 states now have at least eight of the 10 Essential Elements of a State Longitudinal Data System. All but one state now assigns students a unique student identifier that "connects student data across key databases across years" and can be used to determine the academic value-add of a school or program. State data systems can be used to determine how ELOs contribute to student achievement in the context of the Common Core.

> "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" *(The Quality Imperative*, p. v).

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."[24]

Similar incentives can be incorporated for schools and ELO providers that link elements of program activities to elements of the Common Core, whether they are the explicit standards or the math practices and ELA capacities. In addition, this kind of action can encourage teachers and ELO practitioners to work more closely together to share information about student academic needs and align programming to support student success.

EXPLORING PROMISING STATE POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROGRAMS THAT CONNECT ELOs AND THE COMMON CORE

As states begin the work of implementing the Common Core, a few forward-thinking locales are considering the potential contributions and the possible roles of high-quality ELOs in supporting the Common Core. The following examples of policies, practices, and programs are provided to spark ideas and conversations for state consideration.

Policy Example

New Hampshire's Competencies and the Common Core

In New Hampshire, the seat-based, Carnegie unit is gone. Students must demonstrate competency to earn credit[25] whether that occurs during the traditional school day or during an extended learning

opportunity. The state redefined the high school learning experience to increase flexibility regarding time and place, allow students to earn credits after the traditional day ends, and measure student mastery of each course through course-level competencies. While the SEA provides guidelines, samples, and rubrics, school districts develop competencies for each course.

As part of the Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR) New England Network for Personalization and Performance (NETWORK), selected high schools are engaged in creating "authentic tasks and common rubrics to measure uncommon assessment tasks that will foster personalized learning resulting in higher student achievement, as demonstrated by lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, and demonstrable success after high school."[26] To this end, local efforts, supported by Investing in Innovation (i3) funds, are using the Common Core to tie students directly to the path of competency.

For example, in a recent workshop, Kim Carter of the Q.E.D. Foundation helped a group of state and high school ELO directors, mathematics teachers, and foundation staffers make connections between the arts and the Common Core math standards. More specifically, the workshop was designed to help participants

- use stained glass to design objects in a geometry-based ELO

- make the connections between the arts-based activities of Hans Schepker and the math competencies, using the Common Core as a bridge

- experience activities in order to process what evidence of learning/mastery might look like with such an activity

The hands-on workshop involved a series of activities, each building on the last, and each building the knowledge and the skills necessary to make connections between art and the Common Core. It began with participants viewing and describing a glass sculpture (http://glassgeometry.com/intro.html). Next, they read and discussed the pertinent section of the Common Core geometry standards before they, as a group, deconstructed a polyhedron. This was followed with a discussion of how the activity connected to the Common Core. Finally, participants finished by drawing a polyhedron in a scaffolded, step-by-step activity. In the end, participants deepened their understanding of the sculpture and knowledge of geometry in the Common Core, and were very clear about the connections between the two.

For more information, contact:
Suzanne Birdsall
Director, 21st CCLC, New Hampshire Department of Education
sbirdsall@ed.state.nh.us

Practice Example

New York State Afterschool Network: Maximizing Website Impact

It is common practice for statewide afterschool networks to have informational websites describing their mission, initiatives, funding, history, and staff. Some sites serve as a way for a network to market services or even as a portal to a shared workspace for network members. The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) uses its website as a tool to inform policy and practice by sharing an array of consensus-based documents and tools produced by the network, many of which seek to advance connections between ELOs and education.

Specifically with respect to the issue of connecting ELOs with public education reform efforts, NYSAN's site (www.nysan.org) has a vehicle that mirrors implications involved in implementing the Common Core. A core network goal is to "Promote statewide standards of quality through a common system of

self-assessment of afterschool programs building on existing state and national standards." In a very few clicks, one can gather as much information as desired about NYSAN's commitment to and rationale for supporting program standards, its approach to creating program standards, and how to become involved in adoption or implementation efforts of program standards with respect to policy and practice.

Beyond the overview of the program quality standards framework on the home site, NYSAN also hosts an interactive website dedicated to the NYSAN Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool and accompanying User's Guide (www.nysan.org/usersguide). NYSAN's use of its website seeks to serve the needs of more than one type of user. For example, the NYSAN Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool User's Guide website assists ELO directors, program evaluators, group leaders, and front-line staff alike in assessing, calibrating, and describing their work, and in engaging in program improvement efforts. It describes the elements and indicators associated with each standard and provides the explanatory, contextualized information necessary to turn assessment into action. With other policy-focused materials such as the two-page ELO Guide for Policymakers, which clearly lists the actions NYSAN wants from state policymakers (with just enough rationale and research to be convincing), NYSAN attempts to reach the diverse set of stakeholders necessary to build a robust statewide system of high-quality ELOs.

Signature initiatives like the Program Quality Framework and Quality Self-Assessment Tool (QSA) give NYSAN a platform to talk about the importance of a standards-based approach to supporting young people's learning, whether in setting quality standards for programs or learning standards for children, as is the case with the Common Core. Because it has long argued for standards at the program level, NYSAN is well-positioned to make a similar

case for linking to the Common Core at the student level, and is preparing to work toward creating materials and conducting capacity building activities to educate stakeholders about the importance of adapting and implementing the Common Core in expanded learning settings in order to support student success.

For more information, contact:
Sanjiv Rao
Director, New York State Afterschool Network
srao@nysan.org

Program Example

Georgia Afterschool Tennis and Education II (GATE II)

In the fall of 2009, the U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) provided a grant to the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council (GAIC), the statewide afterschool network in Georgia, designed to enrich existing ELOs. It provided tennis instruction using community volunteers, teachers, afterschool staff, and tennis instructors who attended a three-hour training. This training was provided by Georgia

National Junior Tennis League (NJTL) chapters – USTA Atlanta, Savannah Area Tennis Association, and the MACH Academy in Augusta, Georgia. Within one year, the GATE and GATE II projects served 1,200 students at 35 sites in Atlanta, Augusta, and Savannah.

Building on this early success, an enhanced version, GATE II, was piloted at select sites. The expanded programming maintains the physical activity of tennis instruction while it adds modules that concentrate on character development and academic support. GATE II honors its commitment to physical activity by tying all of the modules to the sport of tennis. For example, there is a geometry unit that uses the base line of the tennis court to teach angles and degrees.

Early results are promising. Survey results indicate that GATE II increases participation for school-based ELOs and provides six to eight hours weekly of needed and valuable programming for site directors.

Glenhaven Elementary School in Decatur, Georgia, provides one snapshot of an elementary school pilot site that implemented GATE II during the fall of 2010. It tailored GATE II

to support its existing ELO program by selecting the seven modules most appropriate for its site. Glenhaven's 24 students, most of whom had not passed the state summative exam, received an extra hour of academic support every Tuesday and Thursday in addition to their tennis activities.

Although the school has some ideas on how to make the program better in

the upcoming year (e.g., partner with universities to garner help in program delivery and develop a comprehensive supply list, and ask the PTA for support), the school already has been thrilled with the program because

- in-school math lessons are more engaging

- the school can dig deeper on lessons related to math and reading standards

- the program allows students to work in teams, instills cooperative competitiveness, and develops students' ability to engage in reflection about academic growth

These early indicators were so promising that Glenhaven included GATE II in its consolidated school improvement plan as part of its overall strategy to increase student achievement.

For more information contact:
Jill Riemer
Executive Director, Georgia Afterschool
Investment Council
jriemer@afterschoolga.org

Francine Goodman
Afterschool Coordinator, Glenhaven
Elementary School
a_f_goodman@fc.dekalb.k12.ga.us

CONCLUSION

High-quality ELOs make a powerful contribution to student achievement, particularly for those students who are lagging behind their peers. With more than 40 states slated to implement the Common Core, now is the time for states to examine their progress on implementing ELO program standards that address the Common Core, measuring ELO progress against program standards, and incentivizing high-quality programs. In addition, SEAs and statewide afterschool networks can learn from and build on efforts in other places.

As in the example from New Hampshire, SEA leaders can engage both their colleagues who administer ELO programs

within the SEA and the ELO community of program providers at the state and local levels to plan joint professional development activities with schools. By providing these opportunities, states can support ELO providers in the process of understanding the Common Core and identifying alignments between the standards and already-engaging program activities. This type of joint professional development with teachers, administrators, and ELO practitioners fosters team-building and action-oriented partnerships among adults who are serving the same students. And if done effectively, such efforts can secure the alignment between school-day and ELO experiences, goals, and outcomes for students.

In addition, many states have developed ELO program quality standards and policy guidelines. Like the New York example demonstrates, as implementation of the Common Core moves forward, it will be essential to effectively communicate and implement these standards and policies across states.

Finally, it is increasingly clear that data sharing is an essential component to the successful implementation of the Common Core, and that ELOs have an important contribution to make to this process. As states build longitudinal data systems and create an information infrastructure for learning, the Common Core presents a unique opportunity for the integration of ELO data indicators for student outcomes across states. SEA and statewide afterschool network leaders have a key role in supporting the development and

cross-sharing of student data between schools and ELO programs.

We are at a time of promise and opportunity in American public education, with an unprecedented journey ahead for implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Because of the essential role that expanded learning opportunities play in supporting student success, ELO leaders must be engaged in the process from the start. State leaders must leave no stone unturned in utilizing high-quality, engaging, and accessible resources like ELOs in transforming their education systems. As evidenced by the early state examples presented, there are already promising opportunities for SEA and ELO leaders to forge partnerships to meet the challenge ahead. By learning from these and other examples and taking the steps outlined in this brief, state leaders will be able to explicitly connect the Common Core with expanded learning opportunities to ensure that each student is prepared for college, career, and citizenship.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Common Core State Standards Initiative and implementation,
visit http://www.corestandards.org.

To learn more about statewide afterschool networks, visit http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net.

To view state ELO profiles, visit
the Afterschool Investments Project website,
http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/afterschool/statep.html.

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