



American Youth Policy Forum

The Role of Expanded Learning Opportunities in Competency-Based Education Systems:

AYPF Discussion Group

September 24th, 2013

**Hall of States
Washington, DC**

State and district education leaders are increasingly considering implementing competency-based pathways and systems as a way to help more students become college and career ready, as competency-based education allows students to advance at their own pace and provides differentiated, student-centered instruction and assessment across a full range of competencies. Recognizing that college and career readiness involves a host of skills beyond core academic content, competency-based pathways are being recognized as a strategy for fostering those skills. In thinking about the design of competency-based pathways, educators should consider incorporating expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) into the pathways. ELOs take place outside of the boundaries of the school day and allow students to learn in non-school settings with diverse community providers on topics of relevance and interest to students. There is growing agreement that ELOs, afterschool, and summer programs are a promising strategy for helping youth develop the full range of skills needed to succeed in college and careers. ELOs add to the depth and breadth of learning and draw upon many adult experts to augment, enrich, reinforce, and support in-class learning, help students master academic and other competencies, and apply their knowledge. ELOs, afterschool, and summer programs should be viewed as key players in a competency education system.

Because competency education directly challenges the time-based notion of our educational system and measures proficiency for each individual, states, districts, and schools have many questions about designing and implementing these new systems. Fundamental design questions center around how to create a personalized learning experience that meets the needs of every student, regardless of where he/she is academically, utilizing in-school and out-of-school settings; how to ensure teachers and instructors (both school and non-school based) are prepared and skilled in the use of competency-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment; how to create assessments that measure proficiencies that are fair, reliable, and consistent across in-school and out-of-school settings; how to build school and community accountability systems using competency education; how to create and structure partnerships between schools and other types of learning venues that build student competency across many skill domains; and what types of funding and policy changes are needed to support competency pathways across the community. From these large design questions, we can examine questions more tightly focused on ELOs such as what knowledge, skills, and dispositions can best be learned in ELOs; how can schools and ELOs ensure that students receive high quality



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instruction; what type of non-school settings are most conducive to skill attainment; and how to establish data-sharing between ELOs and schools.

There are a few examples of schools and school systems that have developed competency-based approaches that work with ELO providers to provide learning outside the school day and these efforts can help inform the work of others. At the district level, the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) in Rhode Island has begun to offer learning opportunities to high school students through the HUB, an initiative which allows students to demonstrate mastery of high school course content outside of the school day. States are also making policy changes to support schools and districts as they develop new approaches. New Hampshire has mandated competency-based learning statewide and currently offers schools and districts the flexibility incorporate expanded learning opportunities into their curriculum. While limited, these examples can shed light on the challenges and solutions in creating competency-based education pathways.

Overall Goal:

The goal of this Discussion Group is to encourage a collective discussion between individuals and stakeholders working in K-12 education, competency-based education, afterschool and expanded learning, about the role that Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) can play in the development and implementation of competency-based pathways. This meeting will provide the afterschool and competency-based communities a chance to connect and learn about each other's work and potential overlaps, as well as offer participants a chance to learn about how select competency-based systems are working with afterschool, community providers, and others to provide high quality learning opportunities outside of school. Participants will also discuss the benefits, challenges, and policy issues surrounding tighter alignment between ELOs and competency-based education. AYPF is inviting national advocacy organizations, state and local practitioners and intermediaries, and other leading thinkers to engage in this discussion.

The intended outcomes of the discussion groups are to:

1. Help participants to understand competency-based learning and the potential role of expanded learning opportunities.
2. Share emerging practices in communities and states where schools are working with ELOs to provide students with personalized learning that allows them to learn and advance at their own pace.
3. Identify the opportunities and challenges of aligning competency-based and Afterschool/Expanded Learning Programs.



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AGENDA

Presenters in red

9:30 AM **Breakfast Available**

10:00 AM **Welcome, Introductions, and Participant Meet-and-Greet**

10:45 AM **Creating the Vision**

Chris Sturgis, MetisNet

Hillary Salmons, Providence After School Alliance

While most systems that incorporate expanded learning are still in their early stages, many have begun to identify key principles that should undergird such a system. During this presentation, speakers from the afterschool community and the competency-based education community will discuss the perceived benefits of school systems engaging with afterschool/expanded learning opportunities, present reasons for aligning competency-based systems with afterschool/expanded learning programs, and share their vision for such a system. Participants will then have a chance to share their perspective and respond to presenters.

11:15 AM **Panel and Moderated Discussion: State and Local Examples**

In order to ground our conversation in practice and to provide participants with a working understanding of what current systems look like, this session will consist of a moderated panel featuring examples of state and local systems that link schools and afterschool/expanded learning community through competency-based and personalized learning approaches. Representatives will discuss their approach to implementation and highlight the challenges and successful implementation of these initiatives.

Presenters will include:

- *Adam Greenman, Rhode Island After School Plus Alliance*
- *Hillary Salmons, Providence After School Alliance*
- *Lynn Stanley, New Hampshire Statewide Afterschool Network*
- *Carolyn Hudman, Kentucky Out of School Alliance*

After these presentations, the facilitator will moderate a Q&A session in which participants will have the opportunity to engage with providers and each other.

12:45 PM **Networking Lunch**

1:30 PM **Open Discussion: Core Issues**



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Participants will work in both small groups and as a large group to identify commonalities of existing afterschool/expanded learning and competency-based initiatives and brainstorm major issues in this area. As this work in its early stages, the goal will be to identify a range of core motivations, components, and entry points to this work rather than coming to consensus on a set of actionable next steps.

3:00 PM **Final Thoughts and Summary**

Participants will share how their perspective has shifted as a result of this conversation. They will also have a chance to describe and hear about the potential for future work in this area.

3:30 PM **Adjourn**