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|  **Making the Most**  **Of Time:**  **Promoting Expanded** **Learning for All Students** **Discussion Group Brief** **American Youth Policy Forum** **Campaign for High School Equity** |

*The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) has partnered with the Campaign for High School Equity[[1]](#footnote-1) (CHSE) to organize a series of discussion groups focused on key education policy issues of importance to the civil rights community. Through this and previous discussion groups, CHSE and its members have been exploring a range of youth and education-related issues that affect students of color with the goal of promoting a continued focus on equity.*

**Introduction: How can we ensure all students have equitable access to high quality expanded learning?**

To address this question, we convened leaders from education policy, practice, and the civil rights community for a day-long conversation. Representatives from the expanded learning and civil rights community discussed the importance of expanded learning opportunities for the most vulnerable and at-risk youth and strategies for collaboration between expanded learning stakeholders and civil rights advocates.

**DISCUSSION GROUP GOALS:**

* Develop a common understanding of the range of approaches to expanded learning
* Highlight the benefits of expanded learning
* Discuss challenges expanded learning stakeholders face in promoting equity
* Identify opportunities for collaboration between civil rights and expanded learning communities

In this brief, AYPF offers a synthesis of the main themes from the day’s discussion. First, many in the education community define expanded learning in different ways; this event allowed participants to hear about several approaches to the term in the hope that moving forward, we can more clearly define what high quality expanded learning is based on an in-depth understanding of the variety of approaches that exist. Next, this brief documents the wide-ranging benefits of expanded learning for all students, highlights some of the challenges that expanded learning stakeholders face, and identifies promising practices that currently exist. Finally, it identifies opportunities available for collaboration between expanded learning stakeholders and the civil rights community.

**What is “Expanded Learning”?**

***Challenge*:** *Oftentimes, the term “Expanded learning” has meant different things to different people depending on the audience or provider of services. Much of the time, despite using the same language, organizations and individuals are describing different approaches to adding more time for learning.*

One definition of expanded learning was offered by Betsy Brand, Executive Director of the American Youth Policy Forum, who described it as *informal learning that happens in any setting outside of formal classrooms.* This can include settings such as afterschool programs, summer learning opportunities, work-based learning, college and career exploration, or other community-based enrichment activities and can include both academic and non-academic material. Furthermore, many have approached the term through the lens of extending the school day and restructuring learning experiences during that time.

*“Expanded learning is informal learning that happens in any setting outside of formal classrooms.”*

***Betsy Brand, Executive Director, American Youth Policy Forum***

Under the umbrella of “expanded learning,” there is a diverse array of different models and approaches. Expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) have traditionally consisted of community-based programs offering services in partnership with schools that take place beyond the school day. Expanded learning time (ELT) has taken the approach of extending the school day, often working with community partners to enrich instruction, but with the school personnel taking the lead. Other minor linguistic variations can have major implications: What types of images does the term “summer school” conjure up? Most likely, you think of students who were struggling during the school year sitting in the same classrooms working on remedial work with their same teacher. What about summer enrichment? The term might invoke images of a heterogeneous mix of students engaged in project-based learning and taking advantage of summer learning opportunities within the community. The two terms have very different implications; however, oftentimes they are used interchangeably.

Participants highlighted the need for more precise language and a clearer taxonomy to describe the variety of models. Semantic differences have major implications for how a program is structured, how a program is financed, and who is leading the work. Key questions that impact terminology include: is the program primarily school-based or led by community-based organizations? Are programs accessing K-12 funding via Title I and others or are they making use of other streams such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers or Child Development block grants? Who are the educators leading the work: K-12 teachers or other adults in the community? These differences should be understood by policymakers and intermediaries as without a common understanding of these terms, individuals and organizations can misunderstand and talk past one another.

**How Can Stakeholders Communicate the Value of Expanded Learning?**

***Challenge****: Expanded Learning Opportunities are under-utilized by schools, districts, and communities because of a lack of understanding of their value for all students, especially the most disadvantaged. How can we develop more awareness of the benefits of ELOs and communicate those benefits to target audiences?*

Research has identified many of the outcomes of high quality expanded learning programs. They can lead to reduced criminal behaviors; keep students on track to graduate from high school; prepare students for success in college and in careers; promote healthier lifestyles; and strengthen connections between students, families, and communities. For more information on the positive benefits of high quality afterschool see Afterschool Alliance’s [Evaluation Backgrounder](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/challenge2014/EvaluationBackgrounder-FINAL.pdf) and the Harvard Family Research Project’s [OST Research and Evaluation Database](http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database) Given the Campaign for High School Equity’s focus on education reform, participants discussed the educational outcomes that can be fostered through high quality expanded learning. A few key areas that were addressed at the meeting included college readiness, career preparation, and equitable learning opportunities.

**How ELOs Contribute to College Readiness**

* Enhance, support, and strengthen academic skills
* Provide a supportive environment that expects all youth to go to postsecondary education
* Expose youth to college by taking them on college visits and tours
* Provide summer experiences on college campuses
* Help students and families identify prospective postsecondary education opportunities and provide college counseling and advisement
* Provide assistance with the college application process, such as writing essays
* Help families and youth navigate and understand the student financial aid process
* Provide opportunities to meet and work with current college students from similar peer groups who can help youth see themselves as college-goers

**How ELOs Contribute to Career Preparation**

* Provide youth with opportunities for career exploration by offering career counseling and having young people meet and work with different types of professionals in the community
* Provide service learning opportunities during which youth provide voluntary services to the community, such as helping with food banks, measuring water quality and cleaning up streams, or aiding with child care; in the process young people are exposed to various professions and careers
* Assist youth in obtaining internships or apprenticeships with public and private employers where they can sometimes earn a stipend
* Visit workplaces and offices and learn about the skills desired by employers
* Develop mentoring relationships with adults in certain career fields who can provide advice and guidance and encourage further education

**Equitable Learning Opportunities**

* More time for learning, both in- and out-of-school
* Increased access to caring adult mentors
* Exposure to new experiences and ideas that broaden student perspectives
* High expectations for all students
* Development of a wide range of knowledge, skills, and behaviors including social and emotional learning
* Supportive culture focused on youth assets, leadership, and voice
* Smoother transitions between middle to high school and high school to postsecondary education
* Programs located and offered in communities of need
* Programs targeted to students who are low income, lower performing, or lacking in other supports

Despite these benefits, not all schools, districts and systems prioritize expanded learning. One avenue for promoting expanding learning as a meaningful reform strategy is through collaboration with those that are already working on the issue and that have access to key target audiences. There are many existing advocates at the district, state, and national level that can support these efforts, some of whom shared their work with participants at the discussion group:

* [**Statewide Afterschool Networks**](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net%2F&ei=A_HsU8TaN4zksATYjIH4Dg&usg=AFQjCNFCIUphB99GIqhgAVtvibCQDbK8MA&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw) support statewide coordination of expanded learning stakeholders across 42 states. While activities vary by state, many networks make the case for afterschool and summer learning opportunities to elected officials and state agencies. They also convene state and local actors to create sustainable funding and find policy opportunities for expanded learning. These networks have served as champions for afterschool and summer learning and play a key role in convening often-disconnected groups in support of expanded learning.
* [**The National League of Cities, Institute for Youth, Education, and Families**](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nlc.org%2Ffind-city-solutions%2Finstitute-for-youth-education-and-families&ei=IPHsU6uFLJPksASAu4H4DA&usg=AFQjCNF8EMVbYbVLB8VSQg1DdaWUdL299w&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw) is supporting mayors across the country to promote afterschool and summer learning in their communities. They are currently focused on building afterschool systems in an effort to address equity challenges, using mayoral leadership as a key component of such a strategy. Mayors have played a large role in using the bully pulpit to highlight expanded learning as a key strategy to address student needs.
* [**The National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL)**](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.timeandlearning.org%2F&ei=PPHsU6mIN_PjsATAm4LADA&usg=AFQjCNGa1amVA2fXHUdc0fAdQXe5hQ-XYg&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw) is working with districts and schools across the country in what they have coined the “Time Collaborative.” Currently in five states, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Tennessee, the initiative involves an intensive redesign process in which the entire school schedule is restructured to allow for more meaningful and individualized learning experiences and additional planning time for teachers.

**Adams County School District, Colorado**

In collaboration with NCTL, Adams County School District 14 in Colorado turned to extended learning time as a strategy to meet the diverse needs of their students. Having

97% of its students on free and reduced lunch and 67% English Language Learners, the district recognized it needed to do things differently to meet the increased higher standards of the Common Core State Standards. Through an in-depth planning process with NCTL, the district pushed its schools to offer more interventions and enrichment; they hired artists and created arts and sports programs to engage students; they have increased teacher planning time and engaged community members. As a result of these efforts, achievement scores in math and English language arts have been increasing significantly.

**How can Schools and Communities Partner to Promote Expanded Learning for At-Risk Students?**

***Challenge****: Schools and communities have historically worked independently from one another, leading to inconsistencies in program quality and access. Without a coordinated approach program financing is often unsustainable and programs do not have the necessary capacity to meet the needs of all students. Entities such as district and state leadership, businesses, higher education, school systems, civil rights advocates, and other nonprofits need to be involved in a collective agenda that embraces expanded learning.*

* While strong relationships are important, meaningful collaboration requires a common agenda across organizations to be truly effective. Without that common vision, programs find sustainable financing out of reach. In Washington DC, the [Latin American Youth Center](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&sqi=2&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.layc-dc.org%2F&ei=g_HsU5C7NNK1yATciYGwDw&usg=AFQjCNGQveOyECYkpYSkV-5879zBFzPNWA&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw) is a community-based organization that offers educational activities, social services, workforce investment, and other supports to underserved youth in the DC metropolitan area. They have a strong working relationship with the school districts in which they work. However, Lori Kaplan, President and CEO, argued that in addition to such a relationship between K-12 districts and community-based organizations, districts should have a comprehensive strategy for incorporating expanded learning into the school district’s work. In the absence of such a strategy, continued and sustainable investments into LAYC programming have been difficult to attain.
* In Denver, Colorado, district and school leaders work with NCTL to extend the school day. Working with local organizations, they are able to offer enrichment to students who would not normally be able to afford such activities. Partnerships such as those with [the Colorado Legacy Foundation](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.coloradoedinitiative.org%2F&ei=o_HsU-eWKI_hsATFjoGYDQ&usg=AFQjCNEU1FFkyT8F9GTQBXNJGkz72X65_A&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw), [Boys and Girls Club](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bgcmd.org%2F&ei=wPHsU9atAo7IsASs7YK4DA&usg=AFQjCNFM7TndhBSn8efdPzmQiUROPH7-_g&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw), [Denver Broncos](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CCcQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.denverbroncos.com%2F&ei=1PHsU6_6D6resASbsYLIDQ&usg=AFQjCNERvc3hl3uY3wOsyeF7K3J8FJrVBQ&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw), and others have allowed schools to develop strong interventions that provided a range of engagement mechanisms so that students are fully engaged in their learning and gain valuable knowledge, skills, and abilities that are oftentimes learned beyond the classroom.
* In Nashville, Tennessee, the [Nashville Afterschool Zone Alliance (NAZA)](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nashvillez.org%2F&ei=6_HsU8HVDa3JsQTyhYHQDQ&usg=AFQjCNFdWPvneIQYkOdd6e6Mp619OfuDKg&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw) **is** an initiative of the mayor’s office, which partners with the school district to identify students and neighborhoods with the most need for academic enrichment and other out-of-school time supports. NAZA takes a systems approach in which it coordinates resources to accomplish the following:
* Increasing access by targeting resources to where they are most needed
* Driving improved student outcomes by coordinating expanded learning with in-school learning and providing training and professional development
* Improving efficiencies through coordinated scheduling, marketing, transportation, and sharing of resources
* Promoting continuous improvement by collecting data about program effectiveness and holding programs accountable for quality and results.

NAZA’s work was built on the idea of partnerships between key stakeholders within the city and other stakeholders. Initially launched by the mayor, NAZA is currently housed within the Nashville Public Library system and financially supported through Metro government funding, private funding, and diverse in-kind donations. NAZA works very closely with Metro Nashville Public Schools to share data between expanded learning providers and the school district. For more information on additional partners see [here](http://www.nashvillez.org/partners).

These partnerships have led to meaningful benefits for students; early findings show a link between regular participation in high-quality NAZA programs and increased school attendance, fewer behavior incidents, and improved math and science grades.

**How can ELOs Ensure the Needs of Special Populations are Met?**

***Challenge****: All students can benefit from expanded learning; students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and older youth often have specific needs that should be considered. However, those students are often the first to miss out on such activities. Programs and systems must consider strategies to engage underrepresented populations.*

Expanded learning programs oftentimes lack the capacity to address the needs of diverse student populations. While expanded learning programs have traditionally been successful at offering services for younger students, older youth require different programming and more access to partners that might exist beyond the program itself (e.g. internships, college exploration, mentorships, etc.). Other traditionally underrepresented groups include those in rural areas, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Programs, local systems, and states oftentimes do not offer or systematize a focus on those underrepresented populations. Some examples of those that do include:

* Boise, Idaho has pioneered a program in which mobile recreation vans travel to communities that have not had access to expanded learning programs. The vans have been operating for six years, and offer sports and recreation equipment to low-income areas free of charge.
* California incentivizes the use of [**21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC)**](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww2.ed.gov%2Fprograms%2F21stcclc%2F&ei=E_LsU8jePM33yQSL9oKoCw&usg=AFQjCNFN8gA74DZ-kKLunWmb85xQd1RpJw&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw) federal program funds for older youth. 50% of these funds must go toward out-of-school time programs for high school students.

**How Can Data be Used to Address Access Gaps?**

***Challenge****: While some communities have increased their efforts to identify gaps in access to high quality programs, for many, a well-coordinated data system that identifies and tracks youth participating in expanded learning does not yet exist. Furthermore, merely tracking data on expanding access for students is not sufficient.*

More affluent communities have traditionally had greater access to expanded learning programs as their education systems are better resourced and families have provided the funds to ensure their children have access to such programs. Under resourced communities have largely relied upon public and/or philanthropic funds. While many federal funds have been valuable in supporting communities, they cannot be sufficient. State, local, and philanthropic dollars have leveraged federal funds to an extent, but oftentimes the necessary data on who participates in expanded learning is not available and thus the youth who need it the most go without programming. There are privacy concerns as well as data system integration issues that prevent communities from providing an accurate picture of who has access. A few key issues were highlighted:

* Communities must collectively define goals and measures they will use to monitor progress. A systems approach has been successful in many communities across the country, in which programs, intermediaries, and agencies work together to identify the data needs that exist, build systems capable of measuring the necessary data points, and share data across systems.
* One approach to addressing access gaps has been using community mapping projects to identify areas of need and find programming to address those areas. Such data can be used as a powerful advocacy or planning tool. In Nashville, the Mayor has prioritized afterschool and expanded learning opportunities through the Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) and has championed the need for high-quality expanded learning opportunities to increase high school graduation rates. NAZA works directly with the Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) to share data between systems. NAZA and MNPS have worked together across a number of partners to set a collective agenda focused on data. NAZA uses school district feeder pattern data to guide community-based programming and Nashville in turn uses NAZA data to inform its work. Data sharing has streamlined student recruitment and placement across organizations and allowed for the targeting of the most at-risk students.
* In Adams County 14 School District in Colorado, there are privacy concerns for English Language Learner students. The Expanded Learning Time models ensure that permission is already given for wrapped-in services on forms for the regular school day, thus mitigating any concerns about additional paperwork and reporting of information for programs that take place afterschool.

**Moving Forward: Connections and opportunities between ELO and Civil Rights communities, at national and local levels**

***Challenge****: There are several opportunities for expanded learning stakeholders and civil rights groups to coordinate their efforts, but finding the right ways to make those connections can be challenging.*

* While civil Rights and expanded learning organizations have worked together in some cases, participants discussed how it has not been the norm. This lack of coordination has been a result of many factors, including the lack of a common language and differing social networks. Rarely do both groups find themselves sitting at the same table and if they are, the civil rights community is not engaged from the beginning of the process. The civil rights community can be a meaningful ally as they have an extremely deep network of advocates and constituents that span many roles. They can play a major role in communicating the value of expanded learning to a very diverse audience. National civil rights organizations should think about building the capacity of their state and local affiliates to communicate with constituents at all levels. An important part of this is using common language about the benefits of expanded learning, especially for low-income and vulnerable youth.
* Conversations at the federal level between expanded learning and civil rights groups can highlight the opportunities that exist within federal funding streams. While there are numerous federal funding streams that support expanded learning, a unique feature of 21st Community Learning Centers funding stream is that it allows districts, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and other non-profits to be grant recipients. This funding stream can be used to support the work that many civil rights organizations are already doing or currently advocate for. Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio have used their 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants to prioritize family engagement, especially for low-income rural populations.

*“Where are the opportunities for civil rights organizations to communicate with policymakers and practitioners on expanded learning issues?”*

***Don Long, Senior Policy Analyst, Campaign for High School Equity***

* At the federal level, data can be used to spotlight inequities. [**The Civil Rights Data Collection**](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Focrdata.ed.gov%2F&ei=OvLsU9v2Nuq_sQTBsoCQDQ&usg=AFQjCNEoZUYRSEJ--e-RL4aFycFJcKRoZQ&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw), which collects data on key education and civil rights issues affecting public schools, can be expanded at the federal level to include learning time as one indicator. [**The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.civilrights.org%2F&ei=TfLsU4fAL_PLsAT21IGADQ&usg=AFQjCNEuKNXNkvrjdFUyaxD6AWTQP4_2gQ&bvm=bv.72938740,d.aWw) asked for “time” to be included as an indicator of student access to equitable learning conditions.
* Discussion group participants made it clear that regardless of the specific issue within the world of youth development, the civil rights community seeks to be included in policy conversations from the beginning. Their role should be one in which they are co-creating policy messages alongside expanded learning organizations. Initiatives such as the Leadership Conference Education Taskforce, convened by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, is a place in which civil rights groups come together to help define a collective education agenda. Included in their work has been a focus on expanded learning time as a tool to improve student achievement.

**Conclusion**

This discussion group offered an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to convene and discuss equity issues in expanded learning. The day offered tangible examples of communities that are addressing the achievement gap, highlighted many of the benefits and challenges of providing high quality programming, and sparked a discussion on how to promote more linkages between expanded learning and civil rights organizations.

1. The Campaign for High School Equity members include: Alliance for Excellent Education • League of United Latin American Citizens • Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund • National Association for the Advancement of Colored People • National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund • National Council of La Raza • National Indian Education Association • National Urban League • Southeast Asia Resource Action Center • The Leadership Conference Education Fund [↑](#footnote-ref-1)