

OregonASK

Expanded Learning Partnership

POLICY PLATFORM

It is critical that our state employ **effective strategies** in order to achieve Oregon's 40-40-20 goals, and support the positive growth of our youth, communities, workforce, and economy.

We believe that **all youth can succeed and thrive given the right opportunity**. We recognize that our state's diverse student populations cannot be solely and equitably educated through the methods found in traditional schooling and have needs requiring innovative strategies, alternative pathways, and Expanded Learning Opportunities beyond the school day.

Oregon's students of color, low-income students, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities remain the most underserved by our public education system. In order to address the achievement gap impacted by the cumulative effect of our state's summer learning loss and growing opportunity gap, our public education system and Afterschool and community-based organizations must come together to provide and sustain **high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities** that help youth grow in positive ways, build a full range of assets, achieve academic success, and to graduate from high school prepared for college, careers, and life.

FOCUS ON SUMMER

Smart use of the summer months has the power to:

- **Support Academic Retention & Growth:** *All young people* experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer. Most students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in *mathematical* computation skills over the summer months. Summer months provide time for students to participate in hands-on, experiential, and educational experiences that support academic growth.
- **Close the Achievement Gap:** Access to summer programs can help close the achievement gap. More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. Low-income students also lose more than two months in *reading* achievement, while their middle-class peers make slight gains.
- **Keep Kids Healthy:** Contrary to popular belief children gain weight three times faster during the summer months, gaining as much weight during the summer as they do during the entire school year. Summer programs keep kids moving and provide healthy meals.
- **Support Parents & Families:** Expanded Learning Opportunities in the summer months provide both students and parents with key supports. Parents consistently cite summer as the *most difficult time* to ensure that their children have safe and productive things to do. These challenges may stem from lack of awareness, affordability, and availability of summer learning opportunities.

Therefore, to increase the return on investment of our education dollars and ensure all children, particularly low-income children, have access to high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities during the summer we must:

1. Increase public investments in programs and organizations that provide high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities during the summer in targeted high-risk, low-income communities.
2. Implement communication strategies to increase awareness and access to existing summer supports, including but not limited to the USDA Summer Food Service Program, public libraries' statewide summer reading program, summer school programs, and school libraries.
3. Intentionally incorporate the Oregon Education Investment Board Equity Lens in all actions, including but not limited to developing funding structures, requirements, and distributing funds.

SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

High quality Expanded Learning Opportunities provided in afterschool and summer programs have the power to:

- **Support Academic Outcomes:** Tutoring, homework help, alignment to state standards, credit recovery, tailored supports, and connections to the world of work, are all successful strategies to raise levels of student achievement and retention in school. Students participating in high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities went to school more, behaved better, received better grades, and did better on tests compared to non-participating students.
- **Engage Students:** Afterschool and summer programs provide students with hands-on, experiential and contextualized learning experiences that support connections between school day instruction and students' learning. Connections to mentors and industry professionals also support student engagement and motivational resiliency.
- **Support Families:** The hours after school and during the summer are often difficult times for families. In fact, parents miss an average of five days of work per year due to a lack of afterschool care. Afterschool and summer programs support working parents and help keep the whole family connected to the school.
- **Increase Health and Wellness:** Currently, 1 in 4 children in Oregon are considered food insecure and 53% of students are eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program. The USDA Afterschool Meals and Snack program provides healthy meals to roughly 2 million Oregon children per year, and most programs include a physically active component.
- **Promote Positive Youth Development:** Expanded Learning Opportunities promote positive youth development outcomes including but not limited to healthy relationships, feelings of value and self-worth, self-directed learning, and a positive vision for the future.
- **Provide a Low Cost Solution:** On average, high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities cost \$1,000 - \$1,500 per student per school year, compared to traditional childcare, which costs roughly \$4,500 per school year.

Therefore, in order to support student success both in and out of school, we must:

1. Create and maintain state-level funding for high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities in targeted high-risk, low-income communities, so that programs, students, and families have reliable and consistent resources.
2. Increase public, and leverage private investments in community based organizations, afterschool, and summer programs that provide high quality Expanded Learning Opportunities.
3. Protect current funding sources, which include 21st Century Community Learning Center, Employment Related Day Care, the USDA Afterschool Meals & Snacks program, and the Ready to Read Grant program.
4. Intentionally incorporate the Oregon Education Investment Board Equity Lens in all actions, including but not limited to developing funding structures, requirements, and distributing funds.
5. Reward and incent authentic partnerships between schools, Afterschool providers, and programs.

Additional research, resources, and references may be found at www.oregonask.org and www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds