

## Expanded Learning Opportunities- Stakeholder Legislative Priorities

### Round Table Discussion Summary

A roundtable was convened on March 6, 2018, with the primary goal of gaining insights to shape the legislative policy agenda for Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) going forward in Oregon. Legislators, educators and Expanded Learning providers met to offer creative and innovative ways to support youth toward improving the pathway to success. Participants included national, state and local leaders and educational providers. Please refer to the entire list of [participants here](#).

To help frame the conversation, we reviewed recommendations from previously convened [Informal STEM & CTE ESSA Work Groups](#) and looked to the Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) commitments in the state-level plan approved by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):

**Commitment One: Prioritizing and Advancing Equity**

**Commitment Two: Extending the Promise of a Well-Rounded Education**

**Commitment Three: Strengthening District Systems**

**Commitment Four: Fostering Ongoing Engagement**

The reauthorization of ESEA encourages a shift in paradigm to allow states and communities to reclaim local decision-making that makes sense for students, schools and the communities they serve. It allows flexibility in the use of federal funds and encourages states to define accountability in meeting education requirements.

The conversation was anchored by “big picture” questions around barriers to access and sustainable systems, with the overarching goal of identifying potential legislative and policy recommendations that will support systematic implementation of Expanded Learning Opportunities to increase student success.

#### Questions considered relating to ESSA:

- With a goal of creating sustainable program services that strengthen district systems and support student success, how can Oregon further align traditional school programs with expanded learning opportunities to meet the criteria for funding outlined in ESSA?
- How can ESSA help shift paradigms to better prioritize and advance educational equity?
- How can we legislatively support capacity building of local educational agencies, school leaders and continuous improvement that is necessary for sustainable ELO programs going forward?

The ensuing discussion echoed and reinforced prior focus group and task force priorities and strategies including:

- **Youth empowerment**
- **Professional Development**
- **Quality programs and sustainable resources**
- **Family & Community Involvement**
- **Partnerships**

**“We operate in a very resource-constrained environment, so we have to maximize the partnership opportunities. Instead of vying against one another for the limited funds available, we should collaborate to build a system of community based programs and schools who share a joint vision in order to connect existing programs and increase graduation rates.”**

**- Matthew Boulay, NSLA Director**

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The emerging discussion themes included the **critical importance of student engagement**; the necessary **alignment of programs with career pathways, interests and available jobs**; **funding flexibility and sustainability**; the primary **importance of early learning** programs and increased **availability of high-quality middle school programs**.

Participants identified **resources - including personnel and training - are spread too thin** in our current system, with successful programs evaporating when a program driver leaves, and dedicated leaders experiencing “burn-out” due to lack of adequate, sustainable resources.

**Using federal, state and local funds** in a creative, sustainable manner is critical to ELO program implementation. Alignment of expanded learning with ESSA implementation would allow us to maximize impact of federal funding to create efficient systems of support for student success.

**Success should be measured** by rubrics and proven ELO program standards that encourage the replication of successful elements of programs that increase access and equity, increase graduation rates, enhance early literacy skills – including reading at grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and support broader sets of employability skills.

### **Additional priorities to consider:**

- **Attendance as measurement of success**
- **Use examples from pilots around the country to build a model that supports engaged learners from kindergarten through high school, in school and beyond.**
- **Target early learning and middle school programs**
- **Capitalize on existing resources and partners, such as libraries**

### **Legislative action that would support successful ELO program implementation:**

- **Include ELO as a carve-out or line item in the state budget**
- **Communication and data sharing agreements between district and community partners**
- **Ensure equity and program funding by extending the well-rounded education promised by ESSA**
- **Provide incentives for, or support the coordination of proficiency credit for high school and post-secondary programing, particularly in technical fields.**

The importance of building a sustainable system was clear throughout the discussion with on-going creative funding options and local partnerships identified as critical components for success. An important note about building sustainable system is the reliability not only to students who attend the programs, but also providing the families with reasonable options for their students to attend programs while they work.

When designing legislation that would support systematic expanded learning programs, participants identified critical components to include food, transportation and community partnerships.

**“Working families’ wages are worth less every year while child care and extra-curricular activities cost more- kids with less continue to fall further behind. We can do better”**

**-Marissa Johnson, Staff: HD 50, Representative Carla Piluso**