2016-2017 Statewide Strategic Plan for Expanded Learning Opportunities

Presented by the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council to the Commissioner of Education, Office of the Governor, and the 84th Texas Legislature

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TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

Expanded Learning Opportunities Council

Membership

Lizzette Gonzalez Reynolds, Chair
Chief Deputy Commissioner of Education
Texas Education Agency

Susan Baskin
Executive Director
Camp Champions

Aimee Clapp
Special Education Teacher
Ysleta ISD

Terry Conner
Managing Partner
Haynes & Boone, L.L.C.

Dr. Jodi Durón
Superintendent
Elgin ISD

Leila Membreno Hernandez
Parent Representative
Boys & Girls Clubs of Edinburg

Dr. Kurt Hulett
Middle School Principal
Killeen ISD

Mynder Kelly
High School S.A.C. Teacher
Sulphur Springs ISD

Mark Kiester
Chief Professional Officer
Boys and Girls Clubs of the Austin Area

Dr. Robert Sanborn
Executive Director
Children at Risk

Terese Stevenson
Senior Program Officer
Rees-Jones Foundation

Angel Toscano
Manager of After School Programs
ACTIVE Life - Austin

Donna Wasielewski
Community Programs Coordinator
Williamson County Juvenile Services

Planning and Support

Monica Martinez
Associate Commissioner
Standards & Programs
Texas Education Agency

Gene Lenz
Director
Federal & State Education Policy
Texas Education Agency

Julie Wayman
Director
Dropout Prevention & At-Risk Programs
Texas Education Agency

Christine McCormick
Program Specialist
Texas Education Agency

Molly Clayton
Executive Director
Texas Partnership for Out of School Time

John Spence
Program Associate
Texas Comprehensive Center at SEDL

Chris LeSuer
Communications & Policy Intern
Texas Partnership for Out of School Time

Garry Davis
Program Specialist
Texas Comprehensive Center at SEDL

Sara Grunberger
Program Specialist
Texas Education Agency

Kristin Nafziger
Founding Partner, EDVANCE Research and Director 21st CCLC Technical Assistance Center

Danny Martinez
Program Associate
Texas Comprehensive Center at SEDL

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Executive Summary

Senate Bill (SB) 503, 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, created the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Council to study issues concerning ELO and develop a statewide plan with recommendations for ELO programs for public school students in Texas. The commissioner of education nominated thirteen members to the Council with the goal of studying and analyzing topics related to ELO in Texas and developing a statewide plan with recommendations for the 2016-2017 biennium. This report presents the Council's findings and recommendations.

Texas statute defines expanded learning as opportunities provided to public school students during an extended school day, an extended school year, or a structured learning program that occurs before school, after school, or during summer hours. ELO programs commonly consist of intentional, safe, and structured activities for school-aged youth that complement the regular school day such as engaging students in project-based learning, mentoring, tutoring, physical activity, academic support, and educational enrichment in one or more subjects.

Key Findings of the Texas ELO Council

- High-quality ELO programs provide safe places, support economic growth, and help close the academic achievement gap by offering supplemental activities that support but do not replicate the general education program.
- Program standards that are based on best practices are essential to provide the framework for high-quality ELO programs. Standards address areas such as safety, nutrition, interactions, programming, diversity, family engagement, community partnerships, school partnerships, staff development, evaluation, and sustainability.
- Many Texas students in rural, suburban, and urban schools, as well as schools with high concentrations of poverty, have limited or no access to high-quality ELO programs.
- Non-academic programs teach and reinforce skills that are important to employers and post-secondary institutions such as leadership, character development, emotional skills, social skills, and teamwork.
- Cost of programs depends on several factors including the services offered, age of students, and operating hours.
- Texas currently has little state funding dedicated solely to ELO programming.

Texas ELO Initiative

The ELO Council recommends creating a statewide **Texas ELO Initiative** as part of the Texas Education Agency's legislative appropriation, which would enable the agency to administer the

interconnected components of the initiative. The key elements of the initiative's strategic plan are articulated as four goals:

Goal 1. Expand Texas student and family access to high-quality ELO programs.

- Administer state-funded competitive grants to Texas school districts and charter schools and their community-based organization partners to fund high-quality ELO programs that target underserved students in geographically diverse locations at rural, urban, and suburban campuses as well as campuses with high rates of poverty and juvenile crime.

Goal 2. Make high-quality resources available for ELO programs in Texas.

- Provide program guidance, technical assistance, and high-quality resources for the Texas ELO Initiative and for ELO programs statewide.
- Create a blueprint that school districts and community-based organizations can use to replicate high-quality programs and bring their programs to scale.
- Host an annual statewide summit and provide networking opportunities.
- Produce and maintain program-related information and reports.

Goal 3. Strengthen statewide leadership and coordination.

- Maintain up-to-date information on ELO programs operating in Texas in order to identify gaps and opportunities for high-quality ELO and to help parents locate programs.
- Develop, modify, and support quality standards for ELO programs in Texas.
- Conduct an economic impact analysis useful for building on the Texas ELO Initiative as well as attracting and retaining businesses.

Goal 4. Identify the characteristics of Texas ELO programs that have the most impact on students, including academic achievement, character development, workforce readiness, economic development, and assistance to working families.

- Evaluate the design, implementation, and outcomes of the Texas ELO Initiative.
- Coordinate with the Texas ACE program to align data collection and assess the full impact of federal and state initiatives.

Introduction

Senate Bill (SB) 503, passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature and codified in the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 33, Subchapter G, created the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Council to study issues concerning ELO and develop a statewide plan with recommendations for ELO programs for public school students in Texas. The commissioner of education appointed thirteen members to the Council who studied and analyzed topics related to the legislative directive and developed a statewide plan with recommendations for the 2016-2017 biennium. This report presents the Council's findings and recommendations.

TEXAS ELO COUNCIL STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

- Study issues related to creating safe places for children outside of the regular school day
- Study issues related to improving the academic success of students who participate in expanded learning opportunities programs
- Study issues related to assisting working families
- Study current research and best practices related to meaningful expanded learning opportunities
- Analyze the availability of state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students
- Analyze the unmet needs for state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students
- Analyze opportunities to create incentives for businesses to support expanded learning opportunities programs for public school children
- Analyze opportunities to maximize charitable support for public and private partnerships for ELO for public school children
- Analyze opportunities to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in ELO for public school students
- Study the future workforce needs of the state's businesses and other employers

Definition of Expanded Learning

Texas statute defines expanded learning as opportunities provided to public school students during an extended school day, an extended school year, or a structured learning program that occurs before school, after school, or during summer hours. In practice, expanded learning has

no single clear definition or profile for programming, although programs commonly consist of intentional, safe, and structured activities for school-aged youth that complement the regular school day such as engaging students in project based learning, mentoring, tutoring, physical activity, academic support, community service projects, and educational enrichment in one or more subjects.

ELO programs are most often supported by partnerships among school districts, community and faith-based groups, youth-serving organizations, cultural institutions, and/or government agencies to provide a safe place for students to strengthen academic skills, develop social and emotional skills, participate in college and career awareness and exploration activities, and work with hands-on projects that complement course curriculum. The highest quality ELO programs engage parents, siblings, and community partners and provide youth leadership development, and student choice in programming (United Way Worldwide, 2012).

ELO programs encompass two general models:

1. Extended learning time (ELT) models add time to the regular school day, school week, or school year.
2. Out-of-school time (OST) programs operate before school, after school, or during the summer when the regular school day is not in session.

The effectiveness of both models requires quality programming. When this is in place, ELO programs contribute to building safe communities, engaged learning, and a strong Texas workforce. In the wake of SB 503, proponents of both models have come together to analyze research, study existing program models, and make recommendations for expanded learning opportunities in Texas.

Methodology

To accomplish its charge, the ELO Council was active in several forums. The full ELO Council convened in person on three occasions, participated in working sessions and webinars with subject matter experts, and shared the most current and informative resources and materials throughout the process. Working sessions consisted of smaller work groups of Council members and assigned planning staff, but all members were invited and several participated in all three work groups. The work groups were structured to most efficiently address the statutory requirements of SB 503 and the non-statutory topics that the Council requested and prioritized.

The three ELO Council work groups were titled:

1) Scope and Access,
2) Resources and Support, and
3) Programs and Services.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA), with staff support from SEDL and the Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST), facilitated several work sessions. Each work group examined topics related to the scope of work, created problem statements, studied research, identified findings, developed recommendations to address problem statements, and outlined a rationale for each preliminary set of recommendations for the full Council.

In developing the recommendations, the ELO Council considered multiple additional topics including:

- engaging Texas businesses,
- engaging private philanthropy,
- identifying factors that contribute to successful programs, and
- establishing standards for high quality programs.

The Council's work group sessions and strategic discussions resulted in a large number of findings that were carefully considered and developed into the specific recommendations in this report.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE TEXAS ELO COUNCIL

- High-quality ELO programs provide safe places, support economic growth, and help close the academic achievement gap by offering supplemental activities that support but do not replicate the general education program.
- Program standards that are based on best practices are essential to provide the framework for high-quality ELO programs. Standards address areas such as safety, nutrition, interactions, programming, diversity, family engagement, community partnerships, school partnerships, staff development, evaluation, and sustainability.
- Many Texas students in rural, suburban, and urban schools, as well as schools with high concentrations of poverty, have limited or no access to high-quality ELO programs.
- Non-academic programs teach and reinforce skills that are important to employers and post-secondary institutions such as leadership, character development, emotional skills, social skills, and teamwork.
- The cost of programs depends on several factors including the services offered, age of students, and operating hours.
- Texas currently has little state funding dedicated solely to ELO programming.

Because the number of findings was quite large, the work products of each committee were combined, recommendations were cross-walked between committees, and a set of combined preliminary recommendations with supporting rationales was reviewed by the full Council. The

Council deliberated on the combined research, findings, and preliminary recommendations in preparation for development of this report.

Background and Research Presentation

Texas Funding and Programs

One of the tasks of the ELO Council was to assess the current levels of program availability in Texas. Without a centralized statewide resource for ELO programs, it is difficult to determine the number and types of programs operating in the state; however, it is clear that there is a gap between demand for services and availability of programs. In 2014, a statewide study found that 18 percent (880,000) of Texas K-12 students participated in afterschool programs and that another 37 percent (1.5 million) would participate if a program were available in the community (Afterschool Alliance 2014). Practitioners and researchers have attributed the gap to a lack of funding availability. This assertion is supported by recent research showing that existing federal and local resources to support high-quality ELO programs were insufficient to meet demand (Afterschool Alliance, 2012).

It is important to closely examine Texas' federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program because this program is the largest and only dedicated source of public funding for high-quality ELO programs in Texas. This program currently generates about $100 million annually for the state's Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) program, one of the largest statewide OST programs in the country. The stature and size of the Texas ACE program makes it one of the best models on which to base a state-funded ELO initiative in Texas. Appendix C provides more detailed information about the Texas ACE program.

Other federal funding allows ELO activities or programs but is not solely dedicated to that purpose. Examples of federal programs include: No Child Left Behind, Title I, Part A; the Community Development Block Grant; and the Child Care Development Fund. Nonpublic funding plays a role both statewide and locally. Organizations such as the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Texas Network of Youth Services, various faith-based organizations, and 4-H Youth Development are among the most active organizations.

Local revenue is certainly a contributor, but funding levels and sources are more difficult to identify. Usually, local funding serves to meet a specific local need or provides matching funds for public or private grant programs. This revenue can be identified in city, county, and school district budgets in the form of general tax revenue, direct federal-to-local grants, nonpublic grants, parent fees, and other nonpublic sources. According to one study, public and private revenue accounted for 32 percent and 39 percent, respectively, and in-kind contributions made up the remainder of local OST budgets. Parent fees accounted for less than 9 percent of their total funding (Grossman, Lind, Hayes, McMaken, & Gersick, 2009).

While federal funding is not the only source for ELO programs, it is clear that federal funding is the largest resource in the state. In 2011, all federal funding streams combined supplied $289 million to OST programs (Fischer, et.al., 2013). State general revenue contributed another $23.4 million by providing support to programs such as the Department of Family and Protective Services' Community Youth Development Program and School-age Child Care Services, the Department of Agriculture's 3E Grant Programs, and 4-H Youth Development.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 68 percent of school-aged children in Texas live in households where all parents are in the workforce. For working families in particular, expanded learning opportunities have the potential to provide critical support for workforce productivity and student academic achievement. The Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit organization working to ensure that all children have access to affordable, quality afterschool programs, found that in 2013, 19 percent (927,000) of Texas K-12 students are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. Another 18 percent (878,000) of Texas K-12 students participate in afterschool programs. Overall, 37 percent of parents reported that their students would participate in an ELO program if one were available. The demand has grown since 2004 when 30 percent of families reported that their students would participate in ELO (Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

The Texas ACE program has also shown that demand is increasing. In fiscal year 2014, the Texas ACE program served 189,041 students in 174 Texas school districts, representing nearly 4 percent of all Texas students and 6.2 percent of all Texas students living in poverty. Demand is expected to increase based on the rising percentage of students living in poverty. Over the past ten years, the general public school population has increased by 19.3 percent, while the number of students living in poverty has risen by 38.8 percent (Texas Education Agency, 2014).

Cost Effectiveness

The council referenced three studies regarding program cost. One is a statewide report on Texas ACE expenditures, the second is a national study of more than 100 OST programs, and the third is a national study of ELT programs. These studies provide different cost measures and are not directly comparable, but are useful in identifying an estimate of expenditures per pupil.

Grants for Texas ACE sites range from $50,000 to $2.2 million, depending on the size of the program. Grantee budgets for fixed and operational costs are separate and each is capped, as is the cost per pupil, which is currently set at $1,100 per pupil. For Texas ACE, in fiscal year (FY) 2014, the average amount budgeted per pupil was $1,851 with values ranging from $1,739 to $1,936. (Texas Education Agency, Cycle 7 and 8 approved Notices of Grant Award, as of June 2014). The actual expenditures for FY 2014 per pupil averaged $1,425 with values ranging $1,396 and $1,453. (Texas Education Agency, Cycle 7 and 8 final expenditures, October 2014). This reflects only the state cost and does not reflect any local funds or in-kind resources that were contributed by ACE providers. This figure includes fixed, administrative, and direct service

budgets. All programs must comply with strict operating and service standards that are required by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers federal funding source (Texas Education Agency, Cycle 8 Request for Proposals, 2013).

Regarding out of school time programs around the country, one of the first and largest national studies examined annual expenditures of 111 high-quality programs. As noted in the table below, the study found that program expenditures ranged between $790 and $4,320 per pupil, depending on total expenditures, length of the program, operating structure, and grade levels served. The cost per day ranged from $24 to $44. The cost of funding programs varies depending on factors such as the size of the program, level of services, and hours of operation.

In addition, the largest cost driver was staff salaries and benefits, ranging from 60 percent to 65 percent of expenditures. Programs that served younger students tended to be larger and require more staff than programs that served teens. However, staff in programs that served teens tended to be more specialized than those serving younger students. The total cost per pupil was higher for the younger grades during the regular school year because the programs tend to be larger and employ more staff. Because of the larger enrollment, the cost per pupil is lower than programs that serve teens (Grossman, et.al., 2009).

Many OST programs received non-public revenue that was critical to supporting the programs. Grossman, et.al, (2009) also found that, nationally, programs typically benefited from three to five sources of public and non-public funding. In-kind contributions accounted for an average of one-fifth of a program's expenditures.

Average Cost per Pupil in OST Programs

Study	Scope	Average Program Cost per Enrolled Pupil	Average Daily Cost per Enrolled Pupil
Out-of-School Time Programs National Study (Grossman, et.al., 2009)	School Year (K-8)	$4,320	$24
	Summer (K-8)	$1,150	$32
	School Year (Teen)	$1,880	$33
	Summer (Teen)	$790	$44

Extended learning time models, which offer longer regular school days or school years, also vary in cost depending on the type of programming. A recent study by the Wallace Foundation noted that all of the ELT programs examined resulted in a higher cost, but the increase was cost-efficient in relation to the additional time. The cost of adding expanded time in five schools ranged from $1,695 per child for 540 added hours to just $290 per child for 132 added hours.

The schools in this study added an average of nearly 30 percent more time to the school calendar (Kaplan, Farbman, Deich, & Padgette, 2013).

OTHER STATES' FUNDING FOR OST

State	Program Description	21st CCLC (in millions)	State Funds (in millions)	Federal: State Ratio	State Investment per Student
California	Formula grants for new afterschool programs	$124.9	$550	1:4	$87.47
New York	Competitive grants for new afterschool and youth development programs and enrichment of programs that reduce school violence	$84.5	$57	2:1	$21.07
Wyoming	Formula grants for new school-based OST programs	$5.6	$16.5	1:3	$183.13
Illinois	Competitive grants to CBOs serving at-risk teens	$52.1	$8.8	6:1	$4.22
Utah	Competitive grants for new STEM-focused OST programs	$7.2	$5	1:1	$8.35
Connecticut	Competitive grants for school- or CBO-run OST programs	$9.1	$4.5	2:1	$8.12
New Jersey	Formula grants for additional family services in existing OST programs	$22.2	$2.5	9:1	$1.84
Massachusetts	Competitive grants for quality improvements to existing programs	$16.8	$1.6	10:1	$1.68
New Mexico	Competitive grants for new OST programs	$8.8	$1.1	8:1	$3.26
Rhode Island	State match for private foundation funding for summer learning programs	$5.6	$.25	22:1	$1.75

Source: TXPOST, 2014

Comparisons of state-level investments in high-quality ELO can pose challenges because each state serves unique populations and characteristics. Several states have committed to funding ELO programs and several states are currently considering dedicated funding. The table below provides a list of states that have invested in OST and compares the state investments to the federal funding received from 21st CCLCs. Recent state investments range from $250,000 in

Rhode Island to $550 million in California. Most states have invested between one and nine million dollars per year (Texas Partnership for Out of School Time, 2014).

Funds tend to be distributed as competitive or formula grants that create new or supplemental programs. California's investment in ELO programs is the largest among all states. Proposition 49 guaranteed $550 million in state revenue annually for expanded learning programs that complement the state's $120 million federal 21st CCLC funding. This state's investment totals more than all other states combined. California has taken a coordinated approach to building the state's capacity through developing common infrastructure for federal and state ELO funding streams (California Department of Education, 2014).

There are costs to the state for building a statewide infrastructure for expanding and supporting ELO in Texas. For example, programs must be managed; database capacity must be leveraged and adapted for ELO; professional development must be provided; resource materials must be developed; and programs must be held accountable through quality assurance, program evaluation, technical assistance, and management strategies. These administrative and statewide leadership costs would need to be components of any statewide initiative.

Regarding return on investment, the Boys and Girls Clubs across the nation have demonstrated positive results for their popular ELO programs. For example, in Arizona, one regional club network serving 31 clubs and 21,000 families determined that every dollar spent generated $19.33 of positive economic impacts for the community. This translates into hundreds of millions of dollars for one regional club network. Other regional networks across the nation have similar findings (Valley of the Sun Boys and Girls Clubs, 2011). Similar studies on state-level return on investment are not currently available.

State funding provides supports that federal dollars cannot. State funding provides the flexibility that is required to serve Texas' students and families through programs that meet the specific needs of a community or campus. In addition, state-funded programs have more opportunities to innovate and customize programs to meet local needs. A statewide initiative would build partnerships and networks that otherwise would not exist.

The Critical Role of Infrastructure

A state investment strategically aligned with federal 21st CCLC funding through the Texas ACE program would create an efficient, coordinated initiative with the ability to serve more students more effectively. Research on the California initiative, which integrates state and federal ELO funding, demonstrated positive impacts on school attendance, dropout rates, juvenile crime, and academic success (California Department of Education, 2014).

Building infrastructure also requires strategic partnerships and proven models. In Texas, many opportunities exist to build on local initiatives in cities and regions across the state. There are practical examples in which former Texas ACE grantees have sustained ELO programming to some extent after grant funding ended by creating braided local funding streams and community partnerships. Networks of OST providers and other stakeholders are also conducting citywide system-building efforts in several areas of the State.

Texas has a growing number of local government bodies and private foundations that are willing to help fund ELO programs. However, many Texas students who are low income, at risk of dropping out of school, and most in need do not have ELO programming available or offered to them. A state ELO investment is essential to bring to scale a meaningful statewide infrastructure for ELO programming.

Out of School Time Quality Standards

Quality standards encourage ELO programs, especially out of school time programs, and the larger systems within which they operate, to deploy proven practices that guide implementation and continuous improvement. Quality standards are often used alongside systems of program accountability to integrate operations, professional development, and measurement tools for program evaluation (Granger, 2008; Hayes et al., 2009; Simkin et al., 2013).

In Texas, TXPOST is working with OST programs statewide to adopt quality standards by the end of calendar year 2014. These standards will reflect stakeholder input, including the Texas ACE program, which was gathered through a comprehensive strategic development process. The TXPOST program standards, along with standards that exist for the Texas ACE

HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS: WHAT ARE THEY AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

High-quality ELO programs are those that can demonstrate that they have fully implemented program elements that are proven to provide safe environments and increase positive academic and non-academic outcomes. Usually, a set of high-quality program standards provides the basis for program operations. Out of school time programs tend to use these standards more often than extended learning time programs, but standards could be applicable to both types of ELO programs.

High-quality standards have been adopted in 33 states, either through state-sponsored programs or statewide organizations that coordinate OST partnerships. In Texas, TXPOST is leading the way with developing high-quality standards for OST programs. TXPOST is coordinating with the Texas ACE program at TEA, with providers, and with other stakeholders to build high-quality ELO programs statewide.

program, provide a baseline from which to build and accommodate additional high-quality programs.

TXPOST recommended a rubric that consists of eight categories for OST Program Quality Standards:

1. Safe Environments, Health, and Nutrition
2. Relationships and Interactions
3. Programming and Activities
4. Diversity and Inclusion in Programming
5. Family Engagement and Community Partnerships
6. School Linkages
7. Administration, Organization, and Staff Development
8. Programming Sustainability, Evaluation, and Awareness

Several of the topics addressed in TXPOST standards and Texas ACE align with the strategies recommended in SB 503 and the ELO Council in this strategic plan. The adoption of standards by a statewide initiative under TEA would support a best practices framework for all programs in Texas regardless of funding source and ultimately increase student success as a result of participation in these programs.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Regular access to programs helps close the achievement gap between low-income students and their higher-income peers. Research shows that participation in high-quality ELO programs yields positive academic outcomes (Grossman, et.al., 2009). When properly implemented, ELO programs skillfully reinforce literacy and mathematics for students who are struggling by providing extra time and differentiated methods of instruction, such as project-based learning activities, to keep students engaged in school while building skills and progressing toward graduation, college, and the workplace. Data also indicates that summer ELO programs are critical to helping students retain knowledge from the school year, helping close the achievement gap, and preventing summer learning loss (National Summer Learning Association, 2009).

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

One of the primary drivers of ELO programs is their suitability for offering safe places for students during traditional non-school hours. National research demonstrates that the afternoon hours between three o'clock and six o'clock on school days are the peak hours for behaviors that put children at risk of dropping out of school or becoming involved in the justice system (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). Keeping students engaged in positive activities during these hours can reduce their likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors and becoming victims of crime.

Learning supports in ELO programs allow educators, community organizations, employers, and volunteers to engage students in new and productive ways that spark student interest, support learning, and keep students engaged. Meaningful student engagement is essential in order to build the relationships and infrastructure required to deliver high-quality life experiences. In high-quality programs students are meaningfully engaged with each other and with qualified educators, adult advocates, youth development professionals, employers, college students, professors, and community volunteers. Students participate in activities that encourage inquiry, responsibility, problem solving, solid work habits, creativity, mastery of content, and a sense of belonging.

ELT programs, in particular, have been shown to have a positive effect on the literacy achievement of students performing below standards, especially those in suburban school districts. The effect on math achievement was not as strong, but it was significant across many types of settings. The types and characteristics of the ELT programs make a difference on outcomes. In general, ELT programs are effective when:

- certified teachers deliver the increased learning time academic instruction;
- program facilitators use traditional instruction;
- program facilitators use experiential instruction; or
- specific student subgroups are targeted such as:
    - students struggling to meet grade-level standards in English language arts and
    - students with ADHD (Kidron and Lindsey, 2013).

There is now a solid base of research and best practices clearly showing that quality ELO programs are making a positive difference for students, schools and communities (Peterson, 2013). Students in ELO programs are not only safer or less at-risk during peak hours for juvenile crime after school, but they are also developing critical life skills and extending learning in areas of personal interest as well in core academic content that will serve them as they grow. These profound experiences are an important part of youth development and education, particularly for those students who are struggling, who are at risk of dropping out of school, or for whom resources for enrichment opportunities are limited. The ability to access high-quality ELO programming is critical for students of all backgrounds in order enrich learning experiences and to develop skills that will benefit them in preparing for adulthood—including college and the workplace.

Workforce and Economic Benefits

The cost of investing in ELO is offset by the potential impact on local economies and on Texas workforce development. For example, local programs involving partnerships with businesses, government, and private and community-based organizations enable K-12 students to explore post-secondary opportunities and build strong portfolios that align with workforce needs and the state's five Foundation High School Program endorsement areas. In these local programs,

ELO activities are designed to reinforce coursework and contribute to workforce development that is grade-level appropriate such as career interest inventories, career awareness, career exploration, mentoring, internships, and even career certifications in high-demand fields.

Three of the largest and fastest growing career fields in Texas are in the energy, medical, and technology sectors. Recognizing these trends, Texas is actively building science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce skills that will contribute to the state's economy now and in the future. According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (2014), "the Texas economy will demand more than 715,000 STEM jobs by 2018, up from nearly 585,000 in 2008." This represents an 18 percent increase in demand over a ten-year period. Meeting these demands in the future requires relevant education options for students today. STEM education in ELO programs can increase both interest in and aptitude for STEM fields and have positive impacts on students and Texas communities well into the future.

Currently, the federally funded Texas ACE program supports afterschool sites where students engage in hands-on learning that promotes STEM education including math camps, energy industry camps, weather and flight projects, robotics, wind and solar projects, computer programming, and game and software development. Volunteer engineers from business and industry lead many of these programs, providing mentoring and access to real-world applications of STEM. These types of experiences reinforce learning during the school day and strategically support students with high school and post-secondary graduation planning that will impact the economy and Texas workforce.

In these programs, students develop skills that are valued by employers such as communication, teamwork, leadership, strong character, time management, and other work-life skills needed for success in the workplace. High-quality ELO programs provide enriching pre-employment experiences such as career exploration, job shadowing, college visits, and internships with employers in chosen fields of interest. Many students are exposed to hands-on learning that leads to skills that are beneficial as they develop their career pathways.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

In one Texas ACE program in the Rio Grande Valley, high school students are earning nurse's aide certifications, or Certified Nurse's Aide (CNA), during afterschool time. Through partnerships with an area college and with healthcare employers, many of these students are being hired into paid, career-oriented positions. During the Texas ACE program, students have opportunities to study and develop skills for further healthcare career opportunities and post-secondary options to extend their planning beyond entry-level employment.

It is important to build capacity for businesses to support high-quality ELO programs, not only to invest in the future workforce but also to increase productivity of current employees who are parents of Texas K-12 students. Working parents can rely on high-quality ELO programs to keep their children safe while they focus on their jobs, maintain their work hours, and provide for their families. A study currently underway at Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Service examines the perception of OST by employers and employees.

According to a presentation to the ELO Council, the study recognizes that gaps exist in employers' understanding of logistical problems regarding work hours for employees who are parents of school-aged children. As a result, employers may struggle with productivity problems when ELO programs are absent. In an effort to close this gap, this study, which is scheduled to be published in November 2014, examines Texas employers' attitudes toward ELO programs, documents existing private sector initiatives related to staff productivity during out of school time, and identifies incentives for employers to support programs (Morrison, 2014).

Texas ELO Statewide Strategic Plan

Vision

Involve Texas communities, schools, families, businesses, and post-secondary education institutions to increase access to a coordinated network of high-quality ELO programs that are built on a common set of high-quality program standards, increasing opportunities for all students to be successful and ultimately contribute to closing the achievement gap and supporting a strong Texas economy.

Texas ELO Initiative

The ELO Council's overall recommendation is that the Texas Legislature dedicate funds in the Texas Education Agency's 2016-2017 biennial appropriation for the purpose of implementing the **Texas ELO Initiative**. The initiative would include the following components:

1. A competitive grant program for new or supplemental high-quality ELO services
2. Resources, training, and technical assistance for grant-funded ELO programs and other providers of ELO programs
3. Statewide leadership for increasing access and coordination
4. Program evaluation

Goals, Strategies, Objectives, Activities, and Measures

Goal 1. Expand Texas student and family access to high-quality ELO programs

Strategy 1.1. Administer state-funded competitive grants to Texas school districts and charter schools and their community-based organization partners to provide high-quality ELO programs that target underserved students in geographically diverse locations at rural, urban, and suburban campuses as well as communities with high rates of poverty and juvenile crime.

Objective 1.1. Provide the necessary framework and support for high-quality programs to increase access for Texas students and families.

Activity 1.1.1. Offer and administer grants supporting new and supplemental high-quality ELO programs that will operate within the following minimum criteria:

- Serve students who would benefit the most and otherwise would not receive services.
- Apply a set of standards that are based on adopted TXPOST and Texas ACE standards and that ensure high-quality programs.
- Provide supplemental, developmentally appropriate activities that complement rather than replicate the basic education program either by providing out of school time as well as extended day or extended year programs as allowed by statute.
- Expose youth to career and post-secondary opportunities that align with the five endorsement options of the Foundation High School Program and with high-demand career fields.
- Create opportunities for local employers to engage students through activities such as mentorship, volunteer-led hands-on learning instruction, and internships.
- Address work-life skills such as communication, character building, and leadership that are essential for success in school and careers.

Goal 2: Make high-quality resources available for ELO programs in Texas.

Strategy 2.1. Engage a qualified training and technical assistance provider to support TEA with implementing grant-related ELO activities and support the development of resources for high-quality ELO programs statewide.

Objective 2.1. Increase the availability of program resources for ELO programs in communities across Texas.

Activity 2.1.1. Provide hands-on program guidance, technical assistance, and high-quality resources for the Texas ELO Initiative.

Activity 2.1.2. Convene an annual statewide summit for educators, practitioners, program administrators, interested family members, philanthropic leaders, community-based organizations, the business community, and policy makers. The goals of the annual summit are to provide networking opportunities, build and strengthen partnerships and networks, increase statewide capacity, and educate local and regional intermediaries to make well-informed decisions on how best to serve their communities.

Activity 2.1.3. Coordinate professional peer-to-peer learning communities where grantees can receive program information and training on relevant topics such as implementing high-quality ELO program standards, designing program content, building partnerships, leveraging business and community support, and engaging families.

Activity 2.1.4. Create a blueprint that school districts and partnering community-based organizations can use to replicate high-quality programs.

Activity 2.1.5. Develop and make available an array of useful hands-on best practice resources and tools for school districts and providers.

Activity 2.1.6. Develop a robust data collection and reporting system to inform and improve programs.

Activity 2.1.7. Provide TEA's special education training and materials to Texas' ELO programs.

Goal 3: Strengthen statewide leadership and coordination.

Strategy 3.1. Engage a qualified organization to provide leadership and coordination on the statewide level to expand partnerships and programs throughout Texas and increase access to existing federal, local, and private high-quality initiatives.

Objective 3.1. Identify existing gaps in services and document the costs associated with serving students in ELO programs.

Activity 3.1.1. Develop and maintain current data on the availability of expanded learning opportunities in communities across the state to identify gaps in services and to help parents locate programs.

Activity 3.1.2. Conduct an economic impact analysis useful for attracting and retaining businesses as ELO partners.

Objective 3.2. Increase the number of programs and providers that have access to and use high-quality ELO program standards, network development, and peer-to-peer learning, regardless of funding source.

Activity 3.2.1. Develop, modify, and adopt quality standards for ELO programs operating in Texas.

Activity 3.2.2. Facilitate collaborative efforts with business, private philanthropy, and other entities that can support ELO programs in Texas.

Goal 4: Identify the characteristics of Texas ELO programs that have the most impact on students, including academic achievement, character development, workforce readiness, economic development, and assistance to working families.

Strategy 4.1. Conduct a program evaluation through a qualified external organization.

Objective 4.1. Document the design, implementation, and outcomes of Texas ELO Initiative programs.

Activity 4.1.1. Collect data and evaluate programmatic outcomes including those related to academic success, social and emotional skills, and workforce/college preparedness.

Activity 4.2.2. Analyze data to document the program characteristics that have the most impact on outcomes in order to sustain and replicate high-quality programs.

Activity 4.2.3. Coordinate with the Texas ACE program to align data collection and assess the full impact of federal and state initiatives.

Measuring Success

While a full set of performance measures can only be developed as the program is designed and implemented, all of the activities proposed under this strategic initiative can be expected to provide measurable impact. Specifically, it is expected that the Texas ELO Initiative will be able to provide evidence of impact in the following categories:

General Outputs and Outcomes:

- Total and average cost per program
- Total and average cost per student served
- Total and average cost per slot
- Program hours per student

Infrastructure/Capacity Impacts:

- An increase in programs implementing ELO quality standards
- An increase in access to ELO programs in all areas of the state
- An increase in the number of students and families served by high-quality ELO programs
- An increase in the number of at-risk and underserved students served by ELO programs
- An increase in the level of program access to non-public sources of revenue
- An increase in the level of school and community partnerships
- An increase in the number of businesses and volunteers engaged in ELO programs
- An increase in assistance for working parents

Student Outcomes:

- A positive impact on college and workforce readiness indicators
- A positive impact on graduation and promotion
- A positive impact on indicators of academic achievement
- A positive impact on student attendance
- A positive impact on youth behavior indicators
- A positive impact on measures specific to the unique services offered by each program

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Appendix A

ELO council Presentation Resources by Date Presented

May 2, 2014

Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas ACE presented by Kristin Nafziger, Founding Partner, EDVANCE Research

Texas Out-of-School Time Landscape presented by Molly Clayton, Executive Director, Texas Partnership for Out of School Time

Opportunities for Texas State and Local Leaders to Leverage Afterschool and Summer to Expand Learning presented by Terry K. Peterson, Ph.D., Senior Fellow to the Riley Education Institute and College of Charleston and Advisor to the CS Mott Foundation

Making Sense of the Out-of-School Time Challenge presented by Jenny Knowles Morrison, Ph.D., Texas A&M University, Bush School of Government and Public Service

July 15, 2014

Expanded Learning Time: Redesigning the School Schedule to Better Meet the Needs of Students presented by Blair Brown, Vice President of Advocacy & Communications, National Center on Time and Learning

Why Summer Matters presented by Sarah Pitcock, Chief Executive Officer, National Summer Learning Association

September 29, 2014

Employer Strategies for Supporting Out of School Time Programming in Texas: Incentives for Action, Opportunities for Collaboration presented by Jenny Knowles Morrison, Ph.D., Texas A&M University, Bush School of Government and Public Service

Appendix B

Topics Studied by ELO Council Workgroups
1 – ELO SCOPE AND ACCESS
T1. Study issues related to creating safe places for children outside of the regular school day
T5. Analyze the availability of state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students
T6. Analyze the unmet needs for state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students
T10. Study the future workforce needs of this state's businesses and other employers
T18. Analyze the benefits and opportunities for extended day and extended year programs
2 – RESOURCES AND SUPPORT
T3. Study issues related to assisting working families
T7. Analyze opportunities to create incentives for businesses to support expanded learning opportunities programs for public school children
T8. Analyze opportunities to maximize charitable support for public and private partnerships for ELO for public school children
T11. Address sustainability related to ELO programs
T12. Examine how professional development can improve ELO programs
T13. Analyze the financial challenges for districts and providers related to ELO
3 – PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
T2. Study issues related to improving the academic success of students who participate in expanded learning opportunities programs
T9. Analyze opportunities to promote science, technology, engineering, and math in ELO for public school students
T14. Address the importance of character building, social skills, and social success in student achievement
T15. Address the importance of health care, behavioral health, and human services in student achievement
T16. Assess resources available for Special Education services in ELO
T17. Address the importance of nutrition and healthy lifestyles on learning

Non-statutory topics are in *italics*.

Appendix C

Background of the Texas ACE Program

The federal funding that currently supports Texas ACE began in 1994 as a small federal pilot program created under the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative grew strategically and significantly, such that in 2002 administration and coordination of the initiative was transferred to the states.

In 2008, TEA led a significant strategic overhaul of the program to focus on program quality and to strengthen results. What follows are the strategies and actions that were undertaken to integrate research-based best practices and to build an effective statewide infrastructure at TEA that supports high standards and continuous improvement in programs across the state.

TEA established an overall mission for the Texas ACE program for all students to graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. Toward this end, ACE's programmatic objectives are to improve academic performance, attendance, behavior, promotion rates, and graduation rates. External evaluation results reveal that Texas ACE is making significant progress toward achieving these objectives. To support these programmatic goals, the state office also operates under specific goals. Those statewide goals are to:

- Engage a technical assistance provider to support TEA all activities to ensure program quality.
- Engage program evaluation resources, both for a statewide external evaluation, and to train and support local program evaluators in analyzing formative and summative data to continue program improvement strategies.
- Build partnerships with other stakeholders to coordinate efforts to strengthen ELO in Texas.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of program processes and procedures, as well as a needs assessment with grantee leaders.
- Establish program requirements and performance and accountability measures designed to equip grantees and to reinforce best practices for high-quality programming.
- Develop a Texas ACE Blueprint with an array of materials for planning, resourcing, implementing, managing, and enduring afterschool programs.
- Provide training and technical assistance to grantees in building program infrastructure including project management, data collection and analysis, financial management, human resources management, and accountability practices.
- Provide training and technical assistance in research-based strategies for program implementation and deliver professional development for all ACE project

directors, center directors, and other program partners with an enduring focus on high-quality programming.
- Ensure grantees have the necessary tools and resources to implement quality programming.
- Establish performance measures, train grantees, and monitor for performance expectations.
- Ensure that the ACE program office has the resources and tools necessary to support and monitor grantees not only for program compliance but also for program quality.
- Provide an online suite of tools, resources, podcasts, a help desk, videos, lesson plans, and current training materials to support quality OST programming.
- Deliver robust professional development via an annual convening for afterschool providers, convene regional trainings with networks of afterschool providers, host webinars for cost-effective and frequent convening of OST professionals, and coordinate other strategic opportunities to build capacity of grantees to implement quality programming, especially for youth who are at-risk of dropping out-of-school.
- Maintain a focus on sustainability and teach grantees skills necessary for diversifying portfolios, building infrastructure, and designing programs to endure after competitive grant periods end.

The positive outcomes of Texas ACE program are clear. A recent external statewide evaluation of the Texas ACE-21st Century Community Learning Centers found the following when program participants were compared to nonparticipants:

- Program participation for students in grades nine and ten was associated with higher scores in English language arts/reading and mathematics on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).
- Participants in grades six to twelve had fewer disciplinary incidents.
- Participation in grades four to eleven was associated with fewer school-day absences.
- Participants in grades seven to eleven who attended 30 days or more and participants in grades four and five and seven to eleven attending 60 days or more had an increased likelihood of grade promotion. High school students attending 60 days or more had a 97 percent chance of being promoted to the next grade level.

The evaluation also revealed the following:

- Program quality matters. Centers implementing higher-quality practices were correlated with greater reductions in disciplinary referrals and higher rates of grade promotion than programs that failed to implement these practices.
- Connections with other organizations and agencies within the community greatly enhance afterschool centers' programming options.

Implementation of the Texas ACE strategic plan has resulted in a stronger program and improved student outcomes. Specific strategic elements include higher quality programs, full time professional site coordinators and center directors, intentional lessons that connect out-of-school time learning with the regular school day, and increased skills to serve students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. Texas ACE has developed compelling evidence that through its strategic focus on quality, its programs are using out-of-school time to improve and achieve success (TEA, 2013).