

Expanded Learning in California: Myth vs. Fact

Since 2021, with a historic \$4 billion annual investment, California has significantly expanded access to quality afterschool and summer programs through the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), prioritizing students most in need. These programs have been vital, especially for economically disadvantaged students, students of color, English language learners, and students experiencing homelessness, by enhancing their academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being.



Myth: Equitable access to learning is already a reality for all students.

Fact: Disparities persist. Children born into poverty receive 6,000 fewer hours of learning by 6th grade compared to their wealthier peers, with a significant portion of this gap filled by afterschool and summer programs.¹ Without these programs, the opportunity gap widens, affecting academic achievement and future success.

Myth: Schools alone can close the opportunity gap.

Fact: Students spend 80% of their waking hours outside school. California's most underserved communities rely on publicly funded programs to supplement learning. Regular participation in these programs can extend the school calendar by more than 60%, offering crucial academic and social support that complements school-day learning.²

Myth: Redefining “expanded learning opportunities” to include attendance recovery will solve chronic absenteeism and low ADA.

Fact: This approach overlooks the comprehensive benefits of fully-funded ELO-P programs that already enhance daily attendance and engage students and families. Attendance recovery, while important, should not detract from the enriching, holistic experiences afterschool programs provide. Shifting focus risks neglecting the root causes of absenteeism and diluting the impact of these vital programs.

Myth: High school students don't want or need afterschool programs.

Fact: The need for afterschool programs extends into adolescence. High school students face unique challenges, including stress and isolation, which these programs can mitigate by offering academic support, college and career prep, and opportunities for community engagement. Despite representing a significant portion of the student population, high schools receive a fraction of state funding, highlighting the need for greater investment.³

Myth: Afterschool programs are more like babysitting.

Fact: Far from being babysitting services, afterschool programs offer critical academic and enrichment opportunities, adhering to evidence-based practices and quality standards. They play a dual role in supporting students' academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being needs while also providing essential childcare for working families, thereby easing the significant financial burden on California's low-income households.⁴

Celebrating 20 Years of Impact with #PromisesKept



As we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the California Afterschool and Summer Challenge, it's crucial to reinforce our dedication to preserving the state's \$4B investment in these indispensable programs. Together, we can ensure that afterschool and summer learning continues to empower every child in California to reach their fullest potential.

¹ ExpandED Schools - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I4U-WWfho>

² Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) - <https://www.partnerforchildren.org/resources/2017/11/8/expanded-learning-a-powerful-strategy-for-equity>

³ Partnership for Children & Youth - <https://www.partnerforchildren.org/resources/2023/10/6/expanding-horizons>

⁴ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/working-families-spending-big-money-child-care/>