



Expanding **minds** and Opportunities

Leveraging

the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success

This article is an excerpt from the groundbreaking book, ***Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success***. This landmark compendium, edited by Terry K. Peterson, PhD, is composed of nearly 70 research studies, reports, essays, and commentaries by more than 100 researchers, educators, community leaders, policy makers, and practitioners.

Collectively, these writings boldly state that there is now a solid base of research and best practices clearly showing that quality afterschool and summer learning programs—including 21st Century Community Learning Centers—make a positive difference for students, families, schools, and communities.

Together, the collection of articles demonstrates the power of quality expanded learning opportunities to:

- **promote student success and college and career readiness;**
- **build youth assets such as character, resilience, and wellness;**
- **foster partnerships that maximize resources and build community ties; and**
- **engage families in their children's learning in meaningful ways.**

For information on how to order the full book, download sections and individual articles, or explore the topic areas, visit www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds.

About the Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project

The Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project is a 50-state initiative harnessing the power of networks and leaders to help schools and communities leverage the time beyond school to accelerate student achievement. A partnership of funders led by the C.S. Mott Foundation support the Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project. More information about the book and the project, as well as additional resources, can be found at www.expandinglearning.org.

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Building Mastery of the Common Core State Standards by Expanding Learning With Community Stakeholder Partnerships

The development of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) marks a major turning point in the history of the U.S. public education system. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices coordinated a state-led, multiyear effort to create the standards in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts from across the nation. The Common Core (<http://www.corestandards.org>) addresses three leading concerns in our nation's fight for education reform: an inadequate number of students prepared for college and careers, a lack of equity in academic expectations across and within states, and the inability to compare results across states. The Common Core provides clearly defined and consistent standards that represent the knowledge and skills students should acquire within their K–12 education in English language arts and mathematics. These standards are intended to serve as a framework to prepare our children for college and to compete in the global workforce. Through widespread adoption in 45 states and the District of Columbia, educators, administrators, and parents can ensure consistent expectations and support for students, regardless of their zip code.

The Common Core is the “what,” not the “how.” Although we have accomplished a great deal since 2010, there is still a mountain to climb to ensure successful implementation, assessment, and student mastery of the Common Core. CCSSO has prioritized implementation by providing advocacy, communications, and technical resources to state education agencies through its Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) Collaborative (http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/The_Common_Core_State_Standards_Initiative.html). The organization is also involved with two consortia of

states committed to developing and sharing comprehensive assessment instruments aligned with Common Core: the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SMARTER) and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

There are also various other stakeholder groups that are playing significant roles in helping students actualize their potential through the standards. Among these significant stakeholders are expanded learning educators across every state, including leaders in local 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs, who are providing before- and afterschool, weekend, and summer programs. These expanded learning opportunities are an essential component to help students master the Common Core.

- *They support teachers and administrators with additional resources both within and outside the school. These resources provide the necessary student learning supports to help ensure that more students master the rigorous content.*
- *They allow students to go deeper in their learning and development to become college and career ready. Often the flexibility in afterschool and summer programs encourages more active and hands-on learning, with direct connections to workforce and college access opportunities.*
- *They promote student engagement and effective learning habits that are important for students to successfully progress toward on-time graduation. College and career readiness typically necessitates a broad set of skills and dispositions that afterschool and summer learning can help encourage, reinforce, and perhaps even help deliver with community, workforce, and college partners.*

With the effects of devastating state cuts in education, coupled with high drop-out rates as well as high numbers of college students needing remediation courses upon entering post-secondary institutions (Lee, Rawls, Edwards, & Menson, 2011), our schools have been forced to face the reality that they cannot increase student achievement alone. There is a need to coordinate sustainable, cost-effective resources for schools to ensure mastery of the Common Core.

Researcher Robert Balfanz (2010) has shown that student achievement is not fully academic in nature. Challenges can include decreased engagement, academics or poverty. Schools may find a critical need for a “second shift” of human resources to support students in overcoming these challenges and achieving educational goals.

Afterschool and summer learning programs are designed to resource this “second shift.” Through partnerships, these programs work directly with schools, teachers and parents. Districts can design a comprehensive system of support to ensure that students are completing homework, receiving adequate tutoring, maintaining consistent attendance, and receiving appropriate physical and/or social-emotional supports for their academic achievement. Some students may even be able to recover course credit, accumulate new course credits, or explore career and college options through afterschool and summer learning partnerships with colleges, employers, or youth organizations.

An expanded learning educator, with a clear understanding of the math concepts students are studying within the context of the Common Core, is uniquely situated to provide targeted opportunities for students to deepen their learning by applying new concepts through enrichment activities. More time and attention is accorded the skills espoused by the Common Core, increasing the students' likelihood to understand the underlying concepts and acquire key skills that enable them to demonstrate their competency (CCSSO, 2011).

Many afterschool and summer learning programs are well positioned to support learning practices and conditions that accelerate the "habits of mind," which represent the capacities and practices students should exhibit while learning the Common Core, including the following:

English/Language Arts Capacities of a Literate Individual

- *Demonstrate independence.*
- *Build strong content knowledge.*
- *Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.*
- *Comprehend as well as critique.*
- *Value evidence.*
- *Use technology and digital media strategically and capably.*
- *Come to understand other perspectives and cultures.*

Mathematical Practices to Master Grade-Level Standards

- *Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.*
- *Reason abstractly and quantitatively.*
- *Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.*
- *Model with mathematics.*
- *Use appropriate tools strategically.*
- *Attend to precision.*
- *Look for and make use of structure.*
- *Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.*

Afterschool and summer learning programs provide an extended platform on which students can build their expertise in these habits. Expanded learning programs typically use experiential learning strategies that include activities that cater to students' academic needs and their particular areas of interest. Such activities are offered in the form of extracurricular arts, STEM, civic/cultural, or athletic programs; service learning; internships; apprenticeships; mentoring; dual college enrollment; and virtual learning. These programs begin through early-childhood education opportunities. They include partnerships with community-based organizations, corporate and local businesses, state and local government agencies, arts and science organizations, higher education institutions, and faith-based communities. In essence, through expanded learning programs, the community becomes the 21st century classroom.

States and districts can structure frequent and robust opportunities for teachers, principals, and expanded learning program staff to learn and work together. As states are rolling out their implementation plans for districts, they should introduce their afterschool professionals to the standards alongside teachers and principals. This expanded learning workforce will be tutoring and mentoring, designing STEM enrichment projects and activities, leading literacy classes, teaching digital media and photography, and coaching drama, dance, debate, and journalism clubs. How

powerful would it be if these adult staff and volunteers were paired with teachers and administrators in regularly scheduled collaborative sessions on what students will be learning? How powerful would it be if expanded learning staff and volunteers used their planned activities as a platform for students to demonstrate their deeper understanding of a math or English language arts standard? What if all of this learning was shared across the implicit boundaries between teachers and expanded learning providers, thereby building a comprehensive and cohesive alignment between the adults who are educating and supporting all students?

We are starting to see these essential collaborations take shape:

- *In Wisconsin, district and local expanded learning programs are connecting with school curriculum online and directly with teachers. They include current and retired teachers on their staff to facilitate effective engagement with schools and the academic content students are learning (Holsted, 2012).*
- *The Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership has worked with a leading arts curriculum publisher and the Massachusetts Cultural Council to develop an out-of-school-time arts curriculum called “Creative Minds.” This curriculum lists the math core standards that are embedded in each activity (Topal, 2011).*
- *The Georgia Afterschool Investment Council published their revised “afterschool quality standards” to include intentional alignment to the Common Core (Georgia Afterschool Investment Council, 2011).*
- *The New Jersey State Afterschool Network (NJSACC), in cooperation with the New Jersey State Department of Education, completed a statewide pilot training program on the Common Core for afterschool program leaders. Training sessions focused on how to align student activities and curriculum with the Common Core.*

We are also seeing this type of collaboration between state education agencies and the statewide afterschool networks in Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, South Dakota, New Mexico, North Carolina, and New Hampshire. It is becoming an effective mechanism to deploy Common Core training to local expanded learning program providers, especially

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21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees. A recent commentary by the Forum for Youth Investment highlights the unique role program leaders can play in communicating about the Common Core to help schools build stronger relationships with families and the community (Devaney & Yohalem, 2012).

The Common Core is a catalyst to build a transformative education system that provides unique learning experiences for students while leading them to high scholastic achievement. However, it will take investment from all stakeholders, including expanded learning leaders, to develop the comprehensive supports our students, and schools, will need to achieve mastery.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Taliah Givens is a former program director at CCSSO where she led the expanded learning opportunities work within CCSSO's Innovation Lab Network and across CCSSO's strategic initiatives, ensuring its effective integration into the education landscape. Her public sector career in education, youth development, and association management began at Jobs for America's Graduates – DC, Inc. and the Association for Information Systems, which was preceded by her experience as an optical and systems engineer. Givens holds a master's in public administration from Baruch College, CUNY as a 2006 National Urban Fellow to the Xcel Energy Foundation, as well as bachelor's degrees in both computer engineering and electrical engineering technology from Georgia Tech and Alabama A&M University respectively.

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