

Ensuring that all students have access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) is an integral part of a comprehensive P-12 education and a key strategy for achieving New York State's ambitious school reform goals for in turning around low performing schools and ensuring that students graduate from high school college and career ready. ELOs are enriching educational experiences, such as summer learning, afterschool programming, and extended-day programs, that happen outside of the traditional classroom and blend skill acquisition, relationship-building and fun to foster academic and social-emotional growth in students.

Research has shown that high-quality ELOs lead to academic benefits including increases in test scores and achievement, improved attendance, and higher graduation and promotion rates. ELOs also have demonstrated positive impacts on social-emotional learning and development and decreases in risk behaviors. They bring to low-income students the kinds of enrichments that more affluent students have access to regularly – art, music and drama, hands-on science, organized sports, and service and career exploration opportunities –and are critical for positive youth development, for exposing students to role models and potential mentors, and for stemming summer learning loss.

For more information, see NYSAN's report: [The Role of Expanded Learning Opportunities in New York State School Reform](#)

The qualities that define strong ELOs align with key elements of New York State's strategy for ensuring school and district effectiveness. High-quality ELOs:

- Are developed and implemented in the context of collaboration with strong community partners, supporting alignment with school-day learning and the Common Core State Standards;
- Provide opportunities for evidence-based instructional practices, such as project-based learning, that actively engage students and help build content and skill mastery;
- Extend the school's human capital and the time for learning, and connect the school with valuable community resources;
- Connect schools with community partners who have youth development and family engagement expertise; and
- Enhance overall school climate and support social-emotional development and learning.

Recognizing that ELOs are critical to school reform means taking action to support schools, districts and community organizations so they can develop well-integrated partnerships that will result in meaningful educational enrichment. ELO providers and school districts will need targeted guidance and support to ensure they can partner successfully to deliver high-quality programs that are effective, sustainable and accountable. NYSAN recommends:

1. *Increasing access to high-quality ELOs that provide both social-emotional and academic enrichment;*
2. *Creating accountability among the New York State Education Department (SED), districts, schools and community-based organizations for developing and maintaining strong partnerships around ELOs;*
3. *Providing additional guidance to districts, schools and community-based partners to clarify key areas of uncertainty regarding data sharing and allowable uses of program funds and set-asides; and*
4. *Encouraging best practices around ELO curricula, with an emphasis on developing social-emotional skills and complementing and enriching, rather than replicating, school-day curriculum.*