

Recommendation:

Include potential points of contact with expanded learning opportunity (ELO) enrichment curriculum in all model curriculum and materials being developed to implement the Common Core State Standards in New York. ■ Open professional development activities related to the Common Core to community-based ELO providers.

Research:

The Common Core standards provide a new opportunity to bring together school and community-based educators who are committed to student success. The Common Core defines college and career readiness in a way that pushes beyond the traditional academic competence and reflects some habits of mind that youth serving organizations have long championed (e.g. problem solving, perseverance, independence). The best ELOs already utilize evidence-based instructional practices. They embed learning in immersive, project-based performance tasks that offer connections to concrete skills that students can apply in various settings. Using activities that span multiple content areas, ELOs link direct instruction with hands-on experience, enabling students to construct meaning and solve real-world problems.

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

By including ELOs in curriculum planning and professional development activities, schools gain access to a wide variety of expertise and resources that complement and supplement what they deliver. Community partnerships expand the types of learning experiences to which students are exposed, including inquiry and project based learning strategies which actively involves students in exploration of content, issues and questions surrounding a particular curricular area. This type of project-based learning could be further supported if new curriculums included suggestions for aligned activities intended to be implemented by a partnering ELO, and if educators from community-based partners regularly attended trainings on Common Core standards to plan aligned activities in conversation with the appropriate teachers.

Examples:

1. *At an elementary school in Brooklyn, a partnership with Edible Schoolyard has led to the creation of a school garden, where students cultivate plants, observe, compost, and harvest foods that they later prepare and eat together. The goal of the partnership is to teach students about healthful eating and to link healthy eating to environmental health. Hands-on garden time is always followed with classroom extensions so that students have opportunities to use their experiences to further learning. A garden session on pollinators will be followed in the classroom with an assignment to write a letter to the a local paper about honeybee colony collapse; harvest time and the creation of a root cellar might be followed by a read-aloud of [Little House on the Prairie](#) and a discussion of how early settlers preserved the harvest.*

2. *In AfterSchool Math Plus, an ELO offered through the Educational Equity Center, students are exposed to math through around fun, engaging themes that help students find the math in everyday experiences. The ArtMath theme helps students explore the connections between art and math – using algebra and geometry, for example, to construct a kaleidoscope out of a Pringles can and calculate the number of images created. The program provides disadvantaged students with a high-quality math curriculum that exceeds Common Core Standards. AfterSchool Science Plus uses fun activities that develop higher order thinking skills, while also providing role models, dispelling stereotypes about who can do science, and presenting career opportunities. Students participating in The Wonderful Junk project build elaborate structures out of recyclables collected from home, then brainstorm about careers that utilize the skills they have explored and are introduced to diverse role models who exemplify success in those fields.*