

Expanded Learning Opportunities Unity Statement
Supporting the Whole Child for the Whole Day during the Whole Year

As we enter a new decade, it has become increasingly clear that Massachusetts' children and youth require an education that prepares the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the interconnected, global society and economy. With 80% of a child's waking hours spent outside of the traditional school environment, the education, afterschool, early childhood, and youth development communities must collaborate to ensure that every hour is filled with educational, enriching and inspiring learning opportunities – both in and out of school buildings.

WHEREAS, Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) create the pathways for all children and youth, regardless of socio-economic class or ability, to become leaders in world citizenship, innovation and achievement. ELO play a critical role in ensuring that children develop the academic, social-emotional, and 21st century skills necessary to succeed in school, higher education, and the workplace. ELO provide working parents and families with the supports they need to participate fully in the workforce and in their child's education;

WHEREAS, ELO address the academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs of children and youth through coordinated approaches during and after the school day and year and over the summer months. ELO include Afterschool Programs, Licensed School Age Programs, Summer Learning Programs, Extended Day and Year Schools, Community Schools, and School-Community Networks. Through a broad range of approaches, these ELO provide resources and experiences that support the whole child, the whole day, throughout the whole year; and

WHEREAS,

- **ELO increase time for education and enrichment through learning environments** that engage students in productive ways beyond the school day and during the summer months, keeping students engaged, on-track, motivated, and ready to learn.
- **ELO are the essential complement to school reform efforts**, bringing motivation, aspiration, and relevance to the school equation and contributing to school attendance, which is predictive of school success and graduation across all levels of academic aptitude, and academic outcomes.
- **ELO provide flexibility of time, approach, and staffing in order to support students' social-emotional development and the attainment of skills** such as teamwork, conflict resolution, and positive self expression. ELO address children's specific social and emotional needs, based on the latest brain development research.
- **ELO reinforce academic content while teaching 21st century skills** such as problem-solving and communication skills through experiential and applied learning, not necessarily found in school. Through high quality academic and enrichment activities, including music and the arts, sports and recreation, health and wellness, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities, civic engagement, and career and life skills activities, children and youth not only deepen their understanding of in-school tasks, but learn new skills that can only be gained through experience.

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

We commit to improve the quality of -- and expand access to -- the essential Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) that support the whole child, the whole day, during the whole year.

SIGNED,

Expanded Learning Opportunities Policy Platform
Supporting the Whole Child for the Whole Day during the Whole Year

What a Good ELO System Looks Like—the Importance of Coordinated Partnerships, Shared Goals, Data, and Inclusivity

An effective ELO system incorporates the strengths and resources of parents, schools, community-based providers, businesses, and colleges and universities and ensures a sustainable network of supports for families and communities. Shared accountability for student success and well-coordinated, aligned partnerships between schools, districts and community-based partners bring specific expertise, new approaches, and additional resources to children, families, and communities.

Coordinated ELO systems leverage state and local investments in public education systems at a fraction of the cost, incorporating the financial resources, mission, expertise, family engagement and cultural competence of community partners in the education of the whole child. Effective ELO systems offer both core and targeted supports for students, in coordination with schools and districts, a transparent marketplace of complementary supports, and assessment, referral, and measurement mechanisms.

Next Steps: Policy Platform for 2010 and Beyond

- **Establishment of the After School and Out-of-School Time Coordinating Council.** The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time released its findings and recommendations which call for the establishment of a new statewide After School and Out of School Time Coordinating Council. The purpose of this Council would include advancing quality for the broad range of out of school time programs, and increasing collaboration and coordination between out of school time programs and school reform initiatives. Legislation has been filed in both the House and Senate to establish a standing Afterschool and Out of School Time Coordinating Council.
- **Meaningful Involvement of ELO Stakeholders in the Design and Implementation of Education Reform.** Children spend only 20% of their waking hours in school, thus, in order to have a true impact on a child's learning, out-of-school time opportunities represent a critical component of education reform. These opportunities play a critical role in the education of our children and help to close the achievement gap by ensuring that all students achieve academic success and develop the 21st century skills they need to succeed. Providers of afterschool and expanded learning opportunities have been included in the group of stakeholders tasked with designing and implementing key education reform and readiness measures, and these educators must be at the table at all stages of the process.
- **Development of an Effective ELO System.** An effective ELO system incorporates the strengths of parents, schools, community-based providers, businesses, and institutions of higher education and ensures a sustainable network of supports for families and communities and professional development opportunities for program staff. An effective system must be put in place to ensure that children are receiving the high quality out-of-school time opportunities they need.