

# QUALITY STANDARDS for EXPANDED LEARNING

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**FINAL - PHASE ONE**

Produced in collaboration between the California Department of Education, After School Division, and the California Afterschool Network

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# Introduction

In the fall of 2012, the California Department of Education's After School Division contracted with the California Afterschool Network (CAN) Quality Committee to recommend a set of clearly defined standards of program quality in California. Through a competitive application process, the CAN Quality Committee created the Work Group on Quality Standards to develop these recommendations. Work Group members reflected the broad regional diversity of the state of California as well as the various stakeholder groups in expanded learning. A list of members and their organizations appears on page 8. The Work Group drafted recommendations with the five Learning in Afterschool and Summer (LIAS) principles<sup>1</sup> as a foundation for their work. After receiving several rounds of feedback from a broad array of stakeholders across the state, the final recommendations were submitted to the After School Division on June 2013. After reviewing and revising the recommended quality standards, the After School Division approved the twelve quality standards described in this document as guidance for its expanded learning programs.

# Background

The Work Group on Quality Standards emerged from the larger strategic planning process of the After School Division, which began in March 2012. Outcomes of the planning work included vision and purpose statements for the After School Division as well as the identification of four strategic initiative areas that represent focal points for improving the Division's results and impact over the next three years:

- 1) System of Support
- 2) Grant Administration and Policy
- 3) Communication/Information Systems
- 4) Expanded Learning/K-12 Integration

The development of quality after school standards was embedded within the System of Support, whose first goal was to "define elements of program quality."

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<sup>1</sup> For more information visit : <http://www.learninginafterschool.org/>

# Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs

## *What should the Quality Standards for expanded learning programs in California include?*

The standards should be considered in the context of the five Learning In After School and Summer principles which clearly communicate how expanded learning programs contribute to children's learning.

### **Safe and supportive environment**

The program provides a safe and nurturing environment that supports the developmental, social-emotional and physical needs of all students.

### **Active and engaged learning**

Program design and activities reflect active, meaningful and engaging learning methods that promote collaboration and expand student horizons.

### **Skill building**

The program maintains high expectations for all students, intentionally links program goals and curricula with 21st-century skills and provides activities to help students achieve mastery.

### **Youth voice and leadership**

The program provides and supports intentional opportunities for students to play a meaningful role in program design and implementation, and provides ongoing access to authentic leadership roles.

### **Healthy choices and behaviors**

The program promotes student well-being through opportunities to learn about and practice balanced nutrition, physical activity and other healthy choices in an environment that supports a healthy life style.

### **Quality staff**

The program recruits and retains high quality staff and volunteers who are focused on creating a positive learning environment, and provides ongoing professional development based on assessed staff needs.

### **Diversity, access and equity**

The program creates an environment in which students experience values that embrace diversity and equity regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, income level, national origin, physical ability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.

### **Clear vision, mission and purpose**

The program has a clearly defined vision, mission, goals, and measurable outcomes that reflect broad stakeholder input and drive program design, implementation and improvement.

### **Collaborative partnerships**

The program intentionally builds and supports collaborative relationships among internal and external stakeholders, including families, schools and community, to achieve program goals.

### **Continuous quality improvement**

The program uses data from multiple sources to assess its strengths and weaknesses in order to continuously improve program design, outcomes and impact.

### **Program management**

The program has sound fiscal and administrative practices supported by well-defined and documented policies and procedures that meet grant requirements.

### **Sustainability**

The program builds enduring partnerships with the community and secures commitments for in-kind and monetary contributions.



# Recommended Uses of the Quality Standards

The purpose of the quality standards is to describe high levels of performance of a program at the point of service and in program management. The quality standards are not intended to serve as a compliance tool, but as the following:

- **A framework** of clear expectations for all stakeholders.
- **A guide** to inform the After School Division's decision-making, for example, technical assistance decisions, language in requests for applications and policy development.
- **A guide** for program providers to assess their own programs to help determine what they are doing well and what needs improvement.
- **A guide** for parents and youth to identify quality programming.
- **A guide** for school principals and district superintendents to reinforce and advance key priorities.
- **A complement** to other standards in the State of California focused on quality improvement e.g., Learning in After School and Summer, Quality Self Assessment Tool, Quality Self-Assessment Rubric (ASSETs), Center for Youth Program Quality, etc.

# Next Steps: PHASE TWO

The next phase of this project is to provide more context and support for the quality standards. A newly created Quality Standards Work Group will have two deliverables for CDE:

- 1) recommended “descriptors” that describe what the quality standards look, sound, and feel like in a high quality program, and
- 2) a recommended matrix of existing quality self assessment tools aligned to the twelve standards to guide program and site leaders decision-making about quality improvement.

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To apply to be part of the **Phase Two Workgroup on Quality Standards** [click here](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qualitystandards) or visit: <http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qualitystandards>

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**1**

The California Afterschool Network (CAN) will release an application to create a Phase II Quality Standards Work Group, including 10-15 people with some overlap with the previous group and with the After School Division’s new Evaluation and Assessment Work Group.

**2**

The new Work Group will draft descriptors through a series of in-person meetings and conference calls.

**3**

Input to the draft descriptors will be solicited from a wide variety of stakeholders across the state, through the CAN website, the CAN Leadership Team, statewide webinars, CDE After School Division staff, and networks of statewide organizations.

**4**

The Work Group will meet to review input and make revisions based on field input.

**5**

Concurrently with the steps above, the Work Group will provide guidance to a CAN staff person or consultant to crosswalk existing assessment tools from California and across the country against the quality standards, and develop the matrix of assessment tools.

**6**

The Work Group will submit recommendations about descriptors and the matrix to the After School Division by June 30, 2014.



# Process of the Work Group

As a first step, the CAN Quality Committee commissioned the UC Davis CRESS Center to review after school standards across twelve cities/states and identify any themes that were common across states. These findings were presented at the first meeting of the Work Group, in February 2013.<sup>1</sup> The group also reviewed tools currently being used by after school providers in California as well as the five Learning in Afterschool and Summer (LIAS) principles, which the CDE’s After School Division had cited as critical components of the final set of quality standards. The LIAS principles state that learning should be:

- Active
- Meaningful
- Collaborative
- Supports mastery, and
- Expands horizons

Based on these documents, the group brainstormed broad titles for quality standards for California after school and summer programs and used a consensus model to refine and narrow the topics to twelve key areas, or “buckets.” In determining the broad titles, the group took into consideration quality elements for elementary, middle and high school after school and summer programs. This consensus model was used at all face-to-face meetings and conference calls and led to the development of twelve standards.

In addition, the group identified strategies for soliciting ongoing feedback from key stakeholders. One key dissemination strategy was the development of an online site to post each iteration of the draft standards and provide an opportunity for stakeholders to review and provide feedback on the standards. Feedback was solicited through the following channels:

- Regional Leads and their networks
- CDE expanded learning grantees and associated school staff and community partners
- Staff of the After School Division at CDE
- Members of the Curriculum and Instruction

## Steering Committee

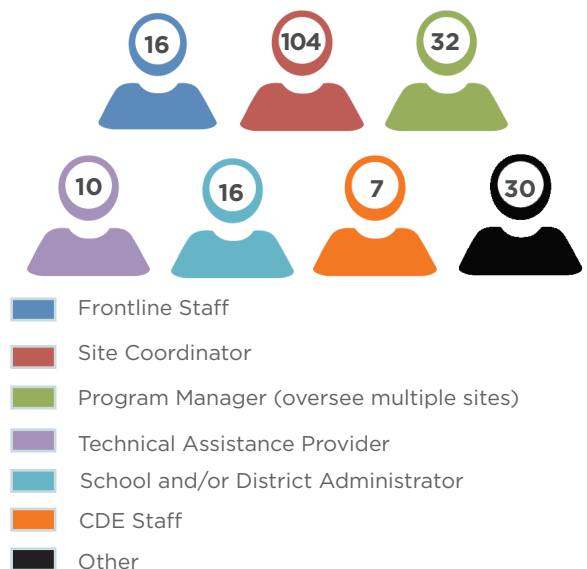
- Outreach by statewide after school organizations, including the California Afterschool Network, ASAPconnect, California School Age Consortium, and Partnership for Children and Youth.

Some stakeholders organized large group meetings to gather input, which was then posted on the online system. In Region 11, for example, 150 Grant Managers, Program Directors and Site Coordinators from districts, community based organizations and cities came together to provide input. At least a third of the participants were current or former K-12 teachers, administrators and/or instructional aides.

The online site was viewed more than 903 times by 546 unique individuals

The Work Group submitted final recommendations to the After School Division in June, 2013. The standards and recommended uses were reviewed by the After School Division Director and staff. Some revisions were made, most significantly a twelfth standard specifically for sustainability was added.

## 200 responses from the field.



1. To view research visit: [www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qualitystandards](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qualitystandards)

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