

A Crosswalk:

The *Learning in Afterschool & Summer* Learning Principles and California Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs



By Sam Piha and Rozel Cruz



Introduction

Over the last two decades, we have seen an extraordinary increase in public and private investments in afterschool and summer programs. As these investments and the number of afterschool and summer programs grew, there was an increased demand that programs provide a consistent level of quality. As a result, many afterschool and summer researchers and organizations developed tools that helped programs define and guide program quality. (Afterschool and summer programs are also referred to as expanded learning programs and out-of-school time programs).

In 2010, the Learning in Afterschool & Summer (LIAS) project was launched to offer five research based principles that serves as a guide for programs wishing to increase the engagement, motivation, and learning of their young participants. Four years later, the California Department of Education (CDE)/After School Division released the *California Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs* (CA Quality Standards).

Many afterschool and summer leaders asked how the LIAS learning principles correspond to the CA Quality Standards. To address this question, we offer this crosswalk paper. Please note that the Quality Standards are focused on points of direct service with youth (#1-6) and standards that are intended to guide program managers (#7-12). This crosswalk only addresses the points of service standards.

The objectives of this paper are to 1) introduce afterschool and summer program stakeholders to both the LIAS principles and the CA Quality Standards; 2) offer a comparison as to how the LIAS principles correspond to the CA Quality Standards; and 3) how both speak to the quality equation.

NOTE: There are many program quality standards issued by other states and organizations, which are currently being used in the field. In this paper, we do not attempt to crosswalk the LIAS principles with the many other program quality standards.

About the *Learning in Afterschool & Summer (LIAS) Project*

The LIAS project is an effort by afterschool advocates and leaders to unify the field of afterschool and focus the movement on promoting young people's learning. The supporters of the LIAS project believe that if afterschool and summer programs are to achieve their full potential, they must be known as important places of learning that excite young people in the building of new skills, the discovery of new interests, and opportunities to achieve a sense of mastery.

The LIAS project is promoting five core learning principles that should define afterschool and summer programs. These learning principles are strongly supported by recent research on brain development, education, afterschool programs, and the growing science of learning. They are also well aligned with the 21st century learning skills and workforce skills that young people will need to succeed in the years ahead, as well as efforts to increase young people's interest in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Each of the learning principles, cited on page 4, support each other and together provide an important framework for afterschool and summer programming.

Learning in Afterschool & Summer Learning Principles

1. Learning that is Active:

Learning and memory recall of new knowledge is strengthened through different exposures – seeing, hearing, touching, and doing. Afterschool and summer learning should be the result of activities that involve young people in “doing” – activities that allow them to be physically active, stimulate their innate curiosity, and that are hands-on and project-based. Hands-on learning involves the child in a total learning experience, which enhances the child’s ability to think critically.

2. Learning that is Collaborative:

Knowledge should be socially centered, as collaborative learning provides the best means to explore new information. Afterschool and summer programs are well positioned to build skills that allow young people to learn as a team. This includes listening to others, supporting group learning goals, resolving differences and conflicts, and making room for each member to contribute his or her individual talents. Collaborative learning happens when learners engage in a common task where each individual depends on and is accountable to each other.

3. Learning that is Meaningful:

Young people are intrinsically motivated when they find their learning meaningful. This means having ownership over the learning topic and the means to assess their own progress. Motivation is increased when the learning is relevant to their own interests, experiences, and the real world in which they live. Community and cultural relevance is especially important to new immigrant youth and those from minority cultures. Rather than learning that is focused on academic subjects, young people in afterschool and summer can apply their academic skills to their areas of interest and real world problems. Also, when learning involves responsibility, leadership, and service to others, it is experienced as more meaningful.

4. Learning that Supports Mastery:

Young people tell us they are most engaged when they are given opportunities to learn new skills. If young people are to learn the importance and joy of mastery, they need the opportunity to learn and practice a full sequence of skills that will allow them to become “really good at something.” Afterschool and summer activities should not promote the gathering of random knowledge and skills. Rather, afterschool and summer learning activities should be explicitly sequenced and designed to promote the layering of skills that allows participants to create a product or demonstrate mastery in a way they couldn’t do before. Programs often achieve this by designing activities that lead to a culminating event or product that can be viewed and celebrated by peers and family members. For older youth, many programs are depending on apprenticeship models to assist youth in achieving a sense of mastery.

5. Learning that Expands Horizons:

Young people, especially those from low-income families and neighborhoods, benefit by learning opportunities that take them beyond their current experience and expand their horizons. Learning about new things and new places promotes a greater sense of potential of what they can achieve and brings a sense of excitement and discovery to the learning environment. Afterschool and summer programs have the flexibility to go beyond the walls of their facilities. They can use the surrounding community as a classroom and bring in individuals and businesses that young people may not otherwise come into contact with. Expanding young people’s horizons also includes helping them to develop a global awareness. This includes increasing their knowledge of other cultures and places and their understanding of the issues and problems we have in common across cultural and political divides.

About the California Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs

“The California Department of Education After School Division (CDE-ASD or After School Division) was formed in late 2011, implementing a recommendation from Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson’s Transition Advisory Team’s final report, *A Blueprint for Great Schools*. Since its inception, this new Division has actively engaged multiple stakeholders and practitioners to the state’s direction. The Division recently engaged over 100 stakeholders and practitioners in the creation of a new vision and strategic plan for expanded learning in California through 2016. A cornerstone of this strategic plan is new Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs. The Quality Standards were developed in two distinct phases (Phase I and Phase II) through a partnership between the After School Division and the California AfterSchool Network Quality Committee.

The Work Groups on Quality Standards (Phase I and II) created a set of 12 Quality Standards and descriptions of what each Standard should look like in action (Standards in Action). Standards in Action are described at the programmatic, staff, and participant levels. In addition, A Crosswalk Between the Quality Standards for Expanded Learning and Program Quality Assessment Tools (Crosswalk) was created. This Crosswalk outlines a number of available tools that can be used for quality assessment and improvement.

The purpose of the Quality Standards is to describe high levels of “Quality” of a program at the programmatic, staff, and participant levels. 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, e.g., technical assistance decisions, language in requests for application, and policy development.
- A guide for program providers to assess their own programs in order 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, Center for Youth Program Quality, etc.”

NOTE: The above text was drawn from the *Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California: Creating and Implementing a Shared Vision of Quality*, published by the California Afterschool Network (CAN), 2014. We strongly suggest that readers review this full document: http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/quality_standards.pdf.

California Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs

Point-of-Service Standards



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.



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.

Programmatic Standards



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.



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.

LIAS Principles and the CA Quality Standards

LIAS Principles	California Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs
Learning that is ACTIVE	   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2) Active and engaged learning • 3) Skill building • 5) Healthy choices and behaviors
Learning that is COLLABORATIVE	    <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) Safe and supportive environment • 2) Active and engaged learning • 3) Skill building • 6) Diversity, access and equity
Learning that is MEANINGFUL	    <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2) Active and engaged learning • 3) Skill building • 4) Youth voice and leadership • 6) Diversity, access and equity
Learning that SUPPORTS MASTERY	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3) Skill building
Learning that EXPANDS HORIZONS	   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2) Active and engaged learning • 3) Skill building • 6) Diversity, access and equity

Additional Resources

You can find more information and resources by visiting:

- LIAS website: <http://learninginafterschool.org/>
- Temescal website: <http://temescalassociates.com/>
- The California Afterschool Network (CAN) website: <http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/>
- The Expanded Learning 360°/365 Project website: <http://www.expandedlearning360-365.com/>
- California Expanded Learning Strategic Planning 2014-16 website: <http://www.caexpandedlearning.com/index.html>
- *Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California: Creating and Implementing a Shared Vision of Quality*: http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/quality_standards.pdf.

About the Authors

Sam Piha is the founder and principal of Temescal Associates, a consulting group dedicated to building the capacity of leaders and organizations in education and youth development. Sam began his career in 1974 as an afterschool worker, an experience that led to 13 years of classroom teaching and work as a child and family counselor and school social worker. Between 1989 and 2006, Sam managed school-based youth programs at the regional and national levels, including the San Francisco Beacon Initiative. Sam has served as editor and contributing author of several important practice guides and journal articles on afterschool programming. He holds a Masters Degree in Social Welfare and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

Rozel Cruz has served as Senior Project Manager since 2010 at Temescal Associates. Rozel has co-authored a number of articles and reports in the field of expanded learning.

Max Piha, Director of Graphics and Social Media, created the blue and white icons used in this paper. Max is also a successful club DJ, using the name DJ Mackswell, and you can view his work and hear unique mixes by going to [this link](#).

What Experts Are Saying About the LIAS Learning Principles

"I use the LIAS principles because I felt they captured many of the core elements that a successful afterschool program should have. Actually, those principles should be reflected in classrooms during the regular school day as well. We spend so much time focused on 'achievement' and so little time focused on how to motivate students to learn. The principles advocated by Learning in Afterschool & Summer strike the right balance and make sense. The LIAS principles promote such an approach, and if applied with fidelity, could lead to real improvements in educational outcomes for kids."

- **Pedro Noguera**, Distinguished Professor of Education,
University of California at Los Angeles

"There is considerable overlap between the LIAS principles and what we mean by social-emotional learning. Sometimes only the terms are different. For example, learning that is active and that supports mastery relates to both the 'A' and 'F' of our SAFE acronym in that students need to practice new skill and we must devote sufficient time and attention to foster student mastery."

The LIAS principles of collaboration, meaningfulness, and expanded horizons are each consistent with the types of skills that compose SEL such as skills relating to managing one's emotions, developing and maintaining satisfactory relationships with others, and enhancing self-awareness. In general, the LIAS principles and the five SEL domains allows flexibility and adaptations to occur for work with different types of youth at different developmental stages, and with different needs and interests."

- **Joseph Durlak**, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychology
Loyola University, Chicago

"At the Coalition for Science After School, we find that there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding as to what high-quality STEM programming afterschool means. But once we apply LIAS principles to examine science afterschool, we can quickly identify what quality should look like and which promising practices we should support that may lead to increased youth interest and engagement in STEM."

LIAS principles outline the program characteristics most likely to foster scientific inquiry and sense-making in youth and help them recognize the relevance of science and technology to their future. LIAS principles help clarify what high-quality science in out-of-school settings should look like and makes STEM accessible to youth development and afterschool staff. What I like best about LIAS is that it allows OST professionals to view STEM as a way to achieve their youth outcomes using existing best practices in youth development--science afterschool is seen as part of good youth development, rather than an added burden on afterschool program staff."

- **Carol Tang**, Executive Director,
Children's Creativity Museum of San Francisco

"I think the Learning in Afterschool & Summer guiding principles are essential. I think it is so important to have a set of core ideas that you can work around. The guiding principles and the way they've been compiled by the LIAS project are really important. Obviously, the work of being in relationships with people, working deeply on stuff – stuff that you care about - that matters. The thing that is fundamentally important to me is expanding horizons - the opportunity for young people to see possible futures. Sometimes young people don't have folks around them to help them understand what's possible for them."

- **Tony Smith**, Illinois State Superintendent of Education

"As the neuroimaging evidence has shown, the more a student is engaged in a learning activity, especially one with multiple sensory modalities, the more parts of his/her brain are actively stimulated. When this occurs in a positive emotional setting, without stress and anxiety, the result is greater long-term, relational, and retrievable learning."

- **Judy Willis, M.D., M.Ed.**, Board-Certified Neurologist,
Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara

"Much of the school day is really spent in learning a set of material, so we're going to need to get away from that. Now part of the Common Core Standards is really pointing in this direction, of problem based learning, working in teams, a more sequential and deeper learning. I think that afterschool and summer learning, are about the same things, and I think we are going to be able to help schools see some new ways of learning."

- **Deborah Vandell**, Founding Dean of the School of Education,
University of California at Irvine