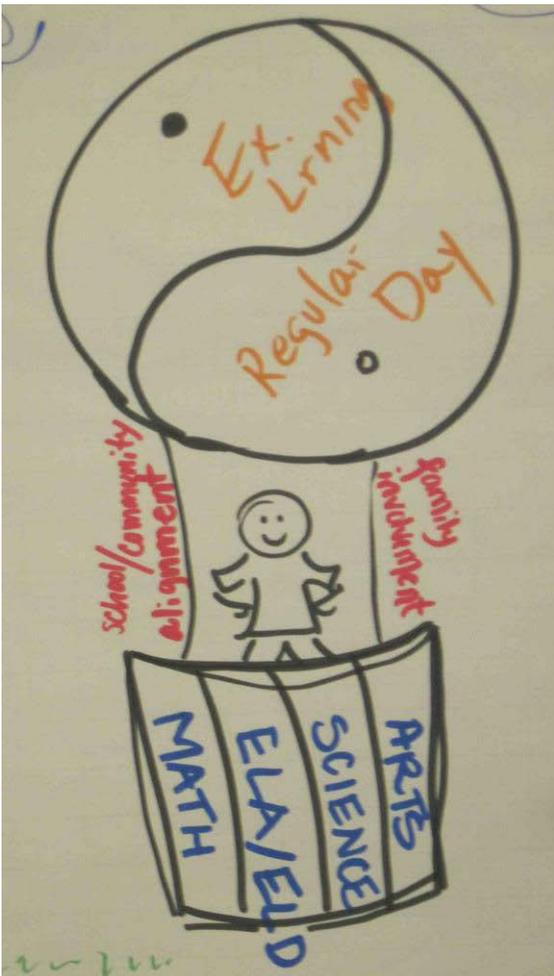




Reaching a Vision of Expanded Learning in California:

Summary Brief: Creating the CDE After School Division Strategic Plan



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Planning Teams

Design Team – 16 members from ASD and the Expanded Learning field
Strategic Implementation Team – 90 members from ASD and the Expanded Learning field

See the [ASD Strategic Plan](#) for a full list of Design Team and Strategic Implementation Team members

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Abstract

In 2012, the California Department of Education’s (CDE) After School Division (ASD) launched an innovative strategic planning process that resulted in two successful overarching results:

1. An ambitious roadmap for the future of Expanded Learning¹ in California in the form of a multi-year strategic plan; and
2. A shift in culture, and increased trust, among ASD and its diverse stakeholders resulting in increased collaborative capacity and ability to realize the plan’s vision.

The planning process also produced a variety of flexible tools that can be adapted for use by others, including state agencies and departments.

The Context

The After School Division at CDE was created in late 2011 in response to a recommendation included in *A Blueprint for Great Schools*.² Shortly after its formation, ASD launched a highly participatory strategic planning process that culminated in the publication of the division’s strategic plan, *A Vision for Expanded Learning in California (2014)*.³ This process built on a critical design principle: **integrated participation and leadership among internal CDE division staff and field representatives** who worked together to develop the strategic plan.⁴ This collaboration ensured the reliability and validity of the plan and began catalyzing the collective commitment necessary to realize its full potential.

Results and Implications

ASD’s strategic planning process resulted in a number of significant results (see Table 1 below). These results and their implications for future action should be considered in other strategic planning contexts.

Table 1: Results of the Planning Process and Implications for Future Action

Results of the Planning Process	Implications for Future Action
Strategic Plan	Guidance: Provides a clear roadmap that can be used at all levels for building capacity, increasing transparency, increasing social capital, and focusing on quality and impact. ⁵
Increased Social Capital	<p>Shift in Culture: Builds the relationships, trust, structures, and mobilizing capacity that allow for the strategic plan to be jointly implemented internally and by those in the field.</p> <p>Leveraging Resources: Effective field engagement extends the resources and capacity of the ASD.</p>

¹ Throughout this document, the term “Expanded Learning” refers to before and after school, summer, and intersession learning experiences that develop the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs and interests of students. Expanded Learning Opportunities should be hands-on, engaging, student-centered, results-driven, involve community partners, and complement learning activities in the regular school day/year.

² *A Blueprint for Great Schools* was created by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson’s Transition Advisory Team. The report can be found at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/bp/documents/yr11bp0709.pdf>.

³ *A Vision for Expanded Learning in California*: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/cp/documents/asdstrategicplan.pdf>.

⁴ The term “field representatives” refers to the diverse group of statewide Expanded Learning leaders from school districts, community-based organizations, and other organizations who participated in this process together with their CDE colleagues. See *A Vision for Expanded Learning in California* pp. 2-3 for a complete roster.

⁵ Michael Fullan uses the term “social capital” to describe the “collaborative power of the group.” Hargreaves, A and Fullan, M., 2013. *The Power of Professional Capital; With an Investment in Collaboration, Teachers Become Nation Builders*, JSD, 34(3).

Table 1: Results of the Planning Process and Implications for Future Action

Results of the Planning Process	Implications for Future Action
<p>A Strategic Planning “Toolkit”</p>	<p>Replicability in Other Settings: Provides a set of tested techniques that can be used to further enhance internal/field collaboration. These techniques can be adapted by others, including other state government agencies and state departments, to conduct collaborative planning processes.</p>

Key Learnings and Applications

Reflection on this strategic planning work revealed a number of key learnings that provide valuable insights and recommendations for similar planning processes across multiple contexts. These include:

1. **The Critical Role of Committed Senior Leadership:** The commitment of top leadership to this process, and in particular, the consistent attention and involvement of the division director was critical to its success. As one participant noted, *“The leadership saw it as a priority, which made it important to us.”*⁶

“The most important byproduct of the work over the last year is the collaborative, collective passion we’ve developed in this room”

Michael Funk
After School Division Director
2. **The Critical Role of Internal/Field Collaboration:** Planning participants identified the collaborative nature of the planning work and the resulting strengthened relationships as the primary success. Speaking to planning participants at the conclusion of the process, ASD Director Michael Funk said, *“The result [of the collaborative process] is that all participants from the department and the field feel equally accountable to its success.”*⁷
3. **Potential Application:** The ASD strategic planning process provides a model for effective governmental strategic planning that involves deep collaboration with field constituencies.

⁶ Strategic Implementation Team member, Strategic Implementation Team Meeting, January 15, 2014.

⁷ ASD Director, Michael Funk, Strategic Implementation Team Meeting, January 15, 2014.

1. Formation of the ASD Creates an Opportunity for Positive Change

A Brief History and Context

Expanded Learning programs play an essential role in educating the whole child, ensuring that students have access to the support they need, and advancing CDE’s mission to “...*prepare students to live, work, and thrive in a highly connected world.*”⁸ In 2002, voters approved Proposition 49, increasing state funds available to before and after school programs located in public schools. Today, California dedicates \$550 million annually to Expanded Learning, more than all other states combined, which, together with over \$130 million in federal funding, helps support nearly 4,400 Expanded Learning program sites.⁹

In late 2011, the CDE created the After School Division (ASD), implementing a recommendation from *A Blueprint for Great Schools* (2011) that emphasized Expanded Learning as a priority. The *Blueprint* recognized that after school and summer learning opportunities play an important and unique role in supporting the education of the whole child. It also emphasized California’s potential to increase the impact of these resources if programs were more consistently of high quality and if information regarding successful program models was disseminated statewide. To realize this potential, the ASD launched a strategic planning process shortly after its formation that culminated in the publication of the division’s strategic plan, *A Vision for Expanded Learning in California* (2014). Highly responsive private foundation grant support provided by the David and Lucile Packard, James Irvine, and the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundations enabled this work to be undertaken on a timely basis.

Discovery Work Highlights Key Assets and Opportunities for Change

Data collected from both internal and external Expanded Learning stakeholders through interviews and an extensive survey during the “discovery” phase of the ASD strategic planning process highlighted strong assets already in place as well as several challenges needing attention. Analysis of these data delivered the good news that the majority of respondents were eager to support improvements in ASD, providing a strong base for collaboration and engagement.¹⁰

The data also revealed key opportunities to form strong, positive relationships between ASD and the field and to enhance ASD’s role in supporting program quality improvement. For example, 74 percent of survey respondents agreed with the statement, “*The ASD seeks out and is responsive to input from the after school/ expanded learning field.*”¹¹ Seventy-six percent of respondents also agreed with the statement “*After school/ expanded learning grantees receive the necessary support from the ASD to run high-quality programs.*” These results evidenced initial progress that ASD had already made in quality support and field relationships and also highlighted the opportunity to build upon this progress and strengthen its capacity in these critical areas.

2. The Planning Process Methodology

To launch the strategic planning process, ASD conducted an intensive **Discovery Phase** that rapidly gathered core information about Expanded Learning in California.

⁸ For CDE's complete mission see <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>

⁹ Afterschool Alliance (2014). Retrieved from: http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state_abbr=CA on 8/22/14.

¹⁰ A summary of the interview and survey results from the Discovery Phase is available at <http://glenpricegroup.com/asd/planattachments.html>.

¹¹ The percentages here and below include “somewhat agree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree.”

¹²

For more information, please

see: <http://www.glenpricegroup.com>.

interviews with more than 40 internal and external key stakeholders, and an online survey, resulting in quantitative and qualitative input from over 700 internal and external stakeholders.¹³

During the **Design Phase**, ASD formed a 16-member Design Team, comprised of ASD staff and field representatives. Integrated participation and shared leadership were crucial principles for this work. Together, the Design Team analyzed data from the Discovery Phase and recommended: vision, purpose, and core values statements; a set of four strategic initiatives; and goals for the ASD. These recommendations provided a basis for the Design Team's final product, the ASD *Statement of Strategic Direction* (SSD).¹⁴

Subsequently, the ASD formed a 90-member advisory Strategic Implementation Team (SIT), comprised of both ASD staff and field representatives, to engage in detailed planning work, using the SSD as a foundation. The Design Team and SIT were intentionally structured to give ASD staff and field representatives equal voices. The planning process required the development of a shared vision and frequent in-depth dialogue around complicated and sensitive issues. To facilitate this, the SIT was subdivided into four smaller Initiative Teams. Each team recommended objectives, activities, and indicators of success to further define pathways for implementing the four strategic initiatives identified by the SSD. Two co-chairs, one an ASD staff member and the other a field representative, led each team.¹⁵ The SIT completed this planning work over the course of ten in-person meetings. These meetings provided a structured and participatory process backed by strong support systems, including co-chair leadership, documentation, communication, and facilitation.

After receiving the SIT's recommendations, the **Review Phase** finalized the planning work by consolidating, refining, and adjusting strategic plan content, balancing the SIT's recommendations with available resources, existing priorities, and feasibility.

Formative assessments were conducted throughout the strategic planning process. These included online evaluation surveys that SIT members completed after each in-person meeting. Ongoing analysis of evaluation data helped to ensure the strategic planning process was responsive to the needs of the project teams. A summative assessment, conducted after the Review Phase, examined the overall success of the strategic planning process, with particular emphasis on the Discovery and Design Phases. To this end, members of the SIT reflected on the overall process and provided their feedback through an in-person meeting and an online survey; ASD leadership also met with the Glen Price Group facilitation and support team to debrief the process.

3. Results

The innovative and collaborative strategic planning process produced several important results, including the successful development of ASD's multi-year Strategic Plan for Expanded Learning in California as well as the improved working relationship between ASD and the field. Together, these results will help drive the successful implementation of this jointly developed plan and establish the potential for far-reaching impacts in Expanded Learning throughout California.

[Result: A Vision for Expanded Learning in California, Strategic Plan: 2014-2016](#)

ASD's Strategic Plan provides a clear roadmap that ASD staff and field representatives at all levels can use for building capacity, increasing transparency, and improving program quality and impact. The plan

¹³ A summary of the interview and survey results from the Discovery Phase is available at <http://glenpricegroup.com/asd/planattachments.html>.

¹⁴ CDE After School Division, Statement of Strategic Direction, April 2013. Available at <http://glenpricegroup.com/asd/planattachments.html>.

¹⁵ SIT member and Co-chair Qualities and Responsibilities are available at <http://glenpricegroup.com/asd/planattachments.html>.

includes four strategic initiatives: Systems of Support, Grant Administration and Policy, Communication/Information Systems, and Expanded Learning/K-12 Integration. The plan’s comprehensive scope strives to represent the different geographies, program types, and roles within California’s Expanded Learning system.

This work may also have impact beyond California. Significant national interest in ASD’s planning work was noted at the May 2014 National Afterschool Network meeting and has resulted in initial discussions regarding national collaboration on Expanded Learning and K-12 Integration.¹⁶

Result: Increased Social Capital—The Changing Nature of the Relationship between ASD and the Field

At the final meeting of the Strategic Implementation Team in January 2014, when the strategic plan was released, ASD Director Michael Funk opened the meeting by highlighting the “collaborative, collective passion” developed through the strategic planning process. This reflected the increased social capital (leadership, relationships, trust, and mobilizing capacity) necessary for the strategic plan to be successfully implemented jointly by ASD and the field. Table 2 illustrates how this increased social capital will help support positive student outcomes.

Table 2: How will the changed nature of the relationship between ASD and the field impact Expanded Learning and student outcomes?

Increased Capacity for Improved Student Outcomes	Effective ASD/field collaboration is a fundamental precondition for achieving statewide fidelity to quality frameworks. Increased capacity has allowed for ASD/field collaboration in defining and taking responsibility for increasing program quality. Higher quality programs will provide the environments necessary for improved student outcomes.
Increased Shared Commitment to Strong Student Outcomes	Stakeholders at every level are invested in the implementation of the strategic plan. “The result [of the collaborative process] is that all participants from the department and the field feel equally accountable for its success, and it’s going to take everybody to get it done.” ¹⁷
Leveraging Resources	Effective ASD/field collaboration extends the resources of each, creating a stronger Expanded Learning system. Changing the nature of the ASD/field relationship makes that leverage possible.
Making the Shift to Lead with Quality	There is a growing realization within CDE that a centralized focus on compliance will not result in the full realization of CDE’s mission. CDE can have a greater impact by supporting the field to build capacity and improve program quality. The enactment and implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula exemplifies this approach as it shifts significant authority to local levels. This new paradigm requires that CDE Divisions reframe, or at least re-examine, the existing models of the state-local relationship. The ASD planning process built the ASD/field leadership capacity necessary to initiate and ultimately realize this shift.

Result: A Strategic Planning “Toolkit”

A final result of the strategic planning process includes a set of tested techniques that can be used to enhance ASD/field collaboration (see Table 3). These techniques can also be adapted by others, including state government agencies and departments, to engage in participatory planning work and build productive relationships with practitioners and others in their fields. Various contexts, resources, constraints, and opportunities will inform how best to adapt these tools for each planning process.

¹⁶ For more information on the National Network of Afterschool Networks, funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation, see: <http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/about-national-network/national-network>.

¹⁷ SIT member, Strategic Implementation Team Meeting, January 15, 2014.

Table 3: Strategic Planning Toolkit		
Toolkit Component	Brief Description	Tools and Techniques
Discovery Tools	In the Discovery Phase, quantitative and qualitative data are gathered from internal and external stakeholders to provide an in-depth understanding of the current context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Interviews • Context Analysis¹⁸
Stakeholder Engagement in Highly Participatory & Collaborative Planning Work	Ongoing integrated participation and leadership from stakeholders is a crucial design principle. Stakeholder engagement tools are intentionally designed to provide co-leadership opportunities and equal voices throughout the planning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Team- a smaller group that analyzes data from the Discovery Phase and recommends overarching plan components such as the vision, purpose, and core values statements • Strategic Implementation Team- a larger group that recommends more specific plan components such as objectives, activities, and indicators of success • Initiative Teams- smaller groups within the Strategic Implementation Team that are led by two co-chairs and focus on planning for one strategic initiative
Formative and Summative Assessment Tools	Designing the most responsive and relevant strategic planning process requires ongoing input from multiple sources to guide and improve the work and to evaluate how successful the process was for all participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-meeting online surveys completed by participants • Overall in-person process evaluation session for all participants upon completion of strategic plan • Post-process online survey completed by participants • Post-process debrief among leadership and facilitators

4. Key Learnings: Successes and Challenges

The key learnings gained from ASD’s strategic planning process were assessed through ongoing evaluation, and are summarized below as successes and challenges.

Table 4 highlights elements of the process that participants agreed worked well.

Table 4: Key Learnings: Successes	
What Worked	Description
The Critical Role of Committed Senior Leadership	Institutional transformation does not occur without the support of leadership. This process benefitted from the strong commitment of top CDE leadership to Expanded Learning and to the ASD strategic planning process. SIT members noted that the ASD Director’s dedication to the planning process contributed strongly to its success. Demonstrating this dedication, the ASD created a privately funded staff position dedicated to supporting and providing oversight for this process.

¹⁸ Existing organizational information and literature regarding the current political climate were collected to analyze

Table 4: Key Learnings: Successes

What Worked	Description
Critical Role of ASD/Field Collaboration	Strategic Implementation Team (SIT) members identified the structure and diversity of the SIT as an important condition for success. SIT members indicated that they were able to gain a better understanding of the various realities within the Expanded Learning field and to arrive at creative solutions to challenging problems through in-depth discussions with diverse stakeholders. Team members also provided positive feedback regarding the smaller Initiative Teams and the roles of the team’s co-chairs.
Process Structure	Statewide planning can be a complex and intricate task. Stakeholders expressed their appreciation that the process was structured with detailed designs for each meeting and that the structure allowed for open and creative discussion among team members.
Flexibility	Following each in-person SIT meeting, ASD conducted an online meeting evaluation to gather feedback on how to improve the strategic planning process. ASD and SIT co-chairs used the evaluation results to improve subsequent meetings, allowing the strategic planning process to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the participants.
Critical Foundation Support	ASD’s planning process received generous, primary support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, with additional support from the James Irvine Foundation. This support provided the resources necessary to engage ongoing outside facilitation and to bring field representatives from around the state to meetings.
Interagency Collaboration	The ASD collaborated closely with the California Comprehensive Center of WestEd to align the ASD internal structure with Strategic Initiatives developed as a result of the planning process.

Evaluations also revealed a number of challenges that should be addressed in future strategic planning work undertaken by the ASD and other state government agencies or departments (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Key Learnings: Challenges

Challenge	Description
Size of the Strategic Implementation Team	While the large size of the SIT allowed for diversity in terms of geographic and program areas of the Expanded Learning field, it created challenges both logistically and for the planning work itself. For example, it was often difficult to set meeting times, manage travel schedules, and arrange meeting venues.
Providing an Effective Orientation to the Process	SIT members suggested that providing a more comprehensive orientation to the strategic planning process at the outset, as well as a follow-up orientation midway through the planning work, would have facilitated more productive planning. Suggestions for what should be included in these orientations included the current status of the ASD and Expanded Learning field and the roles and responsibilities of the SIT and each SIT member.
Frequency and Depth of Cross-Sharing Between Initiative Teams	Although there was deep sharing within the smaller Initiative Teams, many SIT members indicated a desire for more engagement with, and a greater understanding of, the work of the other Initiative Teams. Future adaptations of this work may consider devoting time earlier in the process to combining sub-groups of Initiative Teams to ensure the work benefits from the collective experience of the larger SIT.
Ongoing Communication to the Field	While this planning process engaged the field repeatedly, these opportunities were not provided on a consistent basis and many SIT members felt that they did not successfully communicate the work of the SIT to the field. Team members also indicated that more regular communication to the field about progress to date and next steps would have generated more widespread understanding and field support of the ASD strategic planning process.

Table 5: Key Learnings: Challenges

Challenge	Description
Inclusion of ASD Management	While some managers were deeply involved from the onset of this work, others were not included until midway through the strategic planning process. Ideally, ALL managers would be engaged from the beginning.

5. Conclusion

The people of the State of California have made critical investments in children’s futures by making innovative and unprecedented investments in Expanded Learning programs. Now, we must ensure that these are high-quality programs that effectively meet students’ needs, which may require significant and difficult change.

ASD’s strategic plan and the social capital that was developed through that process provide the foundation necessary to implement these changes. The full and open engagement of field representatives was key to this success and the resulting strengthened relationships between the field and ASD will increase California’s ability to bring the plan to fruition. Creating an open forum for field representatives to interact with each other and ASD staff has built capacity that will be invaluable as ASD and the field now move forward with the plan’s implementation, especially in joint pursuit of higher and more consistent levels of program quality.

“The stakes are high and the time is now...the intentional disruption of the whole education system gives Expanded Learning the opportunity to find a new seat at the table and deliver on our potential to play a very positive role in children’s education.”

Michael Funk
After School Division Director

The perspectives of different geographies, program types, and roles within California’s Expanded Learning system contributed to the comprehensiveness and promise of the strategic plan. Its development demonstrates the value of highly participatory and collaborative methodologies in jointly articulating future direction and it provides California’s Expanded Learning field with a needed roadmap during a time of unprecedented educational change. When sharing a near-final draft of the plan, ASD Director Michael Funk noted, *“The stakes are high and the time is now...the intentional disruption of the whole education system gives Expanded Learning the opportunity to find a new seat at the table and deliver on our potential to play a very positive role in children’s education.”*