



Trauma-Resilient Informed Practices  
in Expanded Learning Programs:  
*A Snapshot of Trends in the Field*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# Trauma-Resilient Informed Practices in Expanded Learning Programs: A Snapshot of Trends in the Field / 2019

Commissioned by: Los Angeles County Office of Education: Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit

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## **The Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit (ELTAU)** [www.aspire.lacoe.edu](http://www.aspire.lacoe.edu)

The mission of the Region 11 Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit is to build and strengthen the Expanded Learning Programs' (ELPs') capacity to develop, implement, and sustain high quality year-round programming (before school, after school, intersession, and summer).

The following tenants drive the work of the Region 11 Team with their clients:

1. Build the internal capacity of the ELP staff so they are self-directed in their work and can institutionalize promising and best practices within their organizations.
2. Provide diverse, needs-driven, and data-driven offerings of technical assistance (TA) to all ELPs in the service area as well as to their subcontracted community-based partners.
3. The CQI process, Quality Standards and Learning in After School and Summer principles are the foundation of all TA provided.
4. Prepare ELPs for changes that are occurring or will occur in the field including but not limited to changes in legislation, policy, and programmatic trends within the ELP field.
5. Maintain a high level of interaction with our clients in order to ensure that we are aware of their current and future needs.
6. Implementation on an ongoing CQI process in the team's work.
7. Partner with local, state, and federal entities to bring added value to clients.



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## **LA's BEST Afterschool Enrichment Program** [www.lasbest.org](http://www.lasbest.org)

LA's BEST Afterschool Enrichment Program plays a vital role in the lives of more than 25,000 unique and talented elementary school students who come from neighborhoods with the fewest resources and the greatest needs. LA's BEST engages children creatively, emotionally, intellectually, and physically, empowering them to explore and discover the opportunities in their lives. We inspire and prepare children to create lives full of choices.

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All program images in this report are courtesy of LA's BEST.

The landmark 1995-1997 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study conducted by Kaiser Permanente and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is one of the largest research studies to examine the long-term health and social impacts of childhood stressors over the lifespans of individuals. California's Surgeon General, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris brought this study to the forefront by surfacing the link between childhood adverse experiences and the risk for significant short-term and long-term social and health problems.<sup>1</sup> The ACE study has informed the practice of various sectors and has been the impetus for deeper levels of trauma-resilient informed work. Today, expanded learning programs are looking for additional ways to develop a trauma-resilient informed lens in order to better serve and support the young people in their programs.

The Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit (ELTAU), located at the Los Angeles County Office of Education, provides technical assistance to 177 grantees including districts, charters, community-based organizations, and cities. These grantees provide expanded learning programs at over 1,750 sites (elementary, K-8, middle, and high school). Over 50% of these grantees currently subcontract to approximately 60 community-based organizations, and 17 of these grantees operate summer programs at over 241 sites.

LA's BEST Afterschool Enrichment Program is a large-scale expanded learning program that serves over 25,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District. LA's BEST is currently taking steps to integrate a trauma-resilient informed approach in a comprehensive manner. Like LA's BEST, programs across the country are beginning to implement trauma-resilient informed approaches. As programs become more intentional in their efforts, they grapple with questions about how to successfully implement this work.



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This report will provide a snapshot of some current approaches, information about gaps and needs, examples from the field, and recommendations for programs and the field to effectively integrate trauma-resilient informed practices into expanded learning programs.

By becoming trauma-resilient informed and by leveraging the assets of the expanded learning field, programs can help to mitigate the often devastating effects of trauma on young people's lives. Programs can also create spaces for healing and provide the support for young people to grow and ultimately thrive following their traumatic experiences.

## KEY LESSONS AND FINDINGS

Trauma awareness in the field of expanded learning is prevalent. However, the current depth and scope of implementation of trauma-resilient informed practices covers a wide spectrum from offering one-time trainings to comprehensive systems-level adoptions of a trauma lens. In most programs, the depth of implementation of trauma-resilient informed practices is limited. The ways programs approach and enter into this work varies and is largely dependent on staff's capacity and the resources available.



### TRAINING

Most programs currently target resources to train direct-service staff in becoming trauma-aware and help staff gain practical strategies.

### PARTNERSHIPS

Some expanded learning programs are cultivating stronger partnerships with the school day and/or mental health service organizations.

### ADAPTATION OF TRAUMA-RESILIENT INFORMED MODELS

The wide array of trauma-resilient informed models is targeted mostly toward the instructional school day. Some programs are adapting these evidence-based models to meet the needs of their programs.

### COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Fewer programs are currently implementing a comprehensive approach. For those programs, this work may include conducting an assessment of needs, fostering key partnerships, providing ongoing professional development for staff, and incorporating a trauma lens into policies and protocols.

### FUNDING

Expanded learning programs in some states are leveraging funding from grants released by the Department of Health and Human Services to combat the opioid epidemic. Some private funding support is also available, but additional resources are still needed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our review of trauma-resilient informed approaches as well as an acknowledgment of the differing contexts and needs of programs across the country, we offer the following four recommendations to support expanded learning programs in their efforts to become trauma-resilient informed.

### 1. BUILD CAPACITY ON ALL LEVELS

Expand the depth and scope of training supports so training can be provided to staff on all levels, including leadership. This would help to ensure better integration within program activities, policies, and program culture. Furthermore, provide ongoing professional development to ensure a more seamless integration with current practices and curricula.

### 2. FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to ensuring a strong partnership with school day staff, partnerships with institutions and entities such as mental health services, foster youth services, homeless youth services, college and university trauma research departments, community organizations, and trauma experts and consultants may greatly enhance expanded learning programs' efforts to implement trauma-resilient informed practices.

### 3. ELEVATE SELF-CARE

Secondary traumatic stress, also known as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, is emotional stress that may result from an individual hearing about a person's experience with trauma. Staff working with young people impacted by trauma are at risk of developing vicarious trauma. In order to address this, programs should emphasize self-care, provide resources, and ensure structural supports to address staff's own trauma and/or secondary traumatic stress.

### 4. CREATE FIELD-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

Guidance, resources, and tools that take into account the context of expanded learning programs are needed to support staff when they are vetting and adapting the resources currently available, when fostering and navigating partnerships, and to provide direction with implementing systems-level trauma-resilient informed practices.



As expanded learning programs explore ways to better serve the needs of students in their programs that are impacted by trauma, we believe they should leverage the strengths and unique qualities of expanded learning programs and integrate a trauma-resilient informed lens in a comprehensive manner to support the young people in their programs experiencing the impacts of trauma.

To access the full report, please go to: <http://bit.ly/TRIreport>