EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

This report was commissioned by the Los Angeles County Office of Education.
The Expanded Learning Technical Assistance Unit (ELTAU)  
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.

LA’s BEST Afterschool Enrichment Program  
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.
We would like to thank the experts, leaders, trainers, and staff in the field of expanded learning who contributed to this report with their valuable information and insights.

Special thanks to:
Danielle Austin, Director of Operations & Youth Development, Hopeworks
Gita Cugley, President and CEO, Gita Cugley and Associates
Jeff Davis, Executive Director, California Afterschool Network
Rebecca Fabiano, President, Fab Youth Philly and Founder of Center for Youth Development Professionals
Jewel Forbes, Consultant, Los Angeles County Office of Education
Steve Fowler, Partner, FowlerHoffman
Mary Graham, Network Lead, Tennessee Afterschool Network
Michael Hannan, Program Development Coordinator, Alternative Schools Network
Keith Harris, Compass Counseling Program Director, Alternative Schools Network
Kirk Lowis, Youth Development Manager, Portage Community Center
Randy Neve, Network Lead, Wisconsin Afterschool Network
Jenn O’Connor, Policy Consultant, New York State Network for Youth Success
Erik Peterson, Vice President, Policy, Afterschool Alliance
Jen Rinehart, Senior Vice President, Research & Policy, Afterschool Alliance
Jay Roscup, Grants Administrator, Lyons Central School District

LA’s BEST would like to thank the team at Los Angeles Unified School District’s School Mental Health Department, led by Pia Escudero, LAUSD’s Director of Health and Human Services, supervising School Mental Health. Pia’s team members, including LA’s BEST’s first Director of Wellness, Joel Cisneros, who is now Director of School Mental Health, are incredibly compassionate and dedicated mental health professionals who believe in the power of afterschool to serve as a true community investment into prevention and wellness. With their guidance and expertise, LA’s BEST has planted seeds for trauma resilience throughout the organization. LA’s BEST is also extremely grateful to its staff for their commitment, hard work, and dedication to empower students and help meet their needs on a daily basis.

LA’s BEST is especially grateful to Kaiser Permanente, the W. M. Keck Foundation, the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, and the LA Trust for Children’s Health. These organizations have invested in the future of children and families by supporting LA’s BEST’s efforts to become fully trauma-resilient informed.

This report would not have been possible without the vision, collaboration, and support of Mary Jo Ginty, System for Support of Expanded Learning Los Angeles County Lead, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). Mary Jo’s leadership and dedication to the expanded learning field are unparalleled. LA’s BEST appreciates the entire team at LACOE for supporting this work.

We are most grateful to Jimena Quiroga Hopkins who researched and wrote this report.

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. 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.

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.
**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.

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**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.
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