



Supporting Schools and their Partners
So Every Child Can Thrive.

To: California Expanded Learning Partners & Allies
From: Jessica Gunderson, Policy Director, Partnership for Children & Youth
Date: March 27, 2015
RE: ASES Daily Rate Survey

Background:

While the costs, demands, and expectations of expanded learning (after school and summer) programs have been consistently increasing since the passage of Proposition 49, the funding has remained stagnant. Specifically, since 2006 the California consumer performance index (CPI) has increased by more than 17%, the state minimum wage was raised from \$8/hour to \$9/hour, and will soon be increased to \$10/hour. Over the same time period, the After School Education and Safety Program (ASES) daily rate of \$7.50 per student/per day has not increased and there is no legal authority for a cost of living adjustment.

Within the expanded learning field, the [California Afterschool Advocacy Alliance \(CA3\)](#) - a coalition of providers and advocates - has been elevating the flat daily rate as the most pressing policy issue for the field. If left unaddressed, this challenge would undermine the last decade of nationally recognized efforts to build a system of high-quality expanded learning programs to serve low-income youth and families and close the opportunity gap.¹ While CA3 members represent many of the largest providers in the state, there was a need to substantiate evidence on the impact of the daily rate from a wider and more diverse sample of the field.

Survey:

In February 2015, the Partnership for Children & Youth, with the help of partner organizations and regional networks, distributed a short online survey to expanded learning programs across the state to gain insight on the impact of the current ASES daily rate.² In only two weeks, **588 respondents** completed the survey. Above and beyond this very high response rate, 76% (450) of the respondents took the additional time to fill out descriptive responses directly speaking to the impacts in their community. The survey respondents represented more than 300 school districts reflecting the diversity of the state; urban to rural districts, multi-district to single school programs, and programs operated both by districts and community-based organizations.

Results:

- 95% of respondents receive ASES funding. 89% of ASES-funded programs surveyed have been negatively impacted by the ASES funding formula of \$7.50 per day/per student.
- More than 83% of ASES-funded programs have found it is more difficult to retain high quality staff (unable to offer competitive pay) and more difficult to attract and recruit quality staff (unable to offer competitive pay).
- 75% of ASES-funded programs also believe it is necessary to reduce the number of enrichment activities offered to children.

¹ The Afterschool Alliance gave California its top ranking in the 2014 edition of its "[America After 3PM](#)" survey, singling the state out for both strong participation among students and high satisfaction with after school programs among parents.

² [Informal survey](#) conducted with limited population, limited response window, and response bias.

- More than 61% of programs also cite a reduction in professional development for staff, an inability to meet the demand of students on waiting lists, and a negative impact on the ability to provide quality academic supports to students.
- Approximately 50% of respondents have had to reduce staff hours.
- Nearly 25% of programs are now serving fewer kids.

Initial Analysis:

The survey results resoundingly support our anecdotal evidence and practical knowledge of programmatic costs. The current ASES funding policy is negatively impacting the students and families that depend on these programs for vital educational services. On average, these programs operate at high poverty schools with an average free and reduced lunch program (FRLP) of over 80%. Unlike the private sector, increases in costs cannot be passed on to our customers – given our customers are low-income families.

More than half of students in ASES-funded programs surveyed have fewer enrichment activities, reduced quality of academic supports, and longer waiting lists as a direct result of the unadjusted ASES daily rate. Almost a quarter of respondents are now serving fewer students. There is a high-level of unmet need for ASES programs that will be further exacerbated. Nearly 1,500 low-income elementary and middle schools that qualify for programs still do not receive ASES funding due to funding limits.

Research has shown that on average it costs at least \$21-24 per day/per student to operate a high-quality after school program.³ With 83% of ASES-funded programs struggling to attract, recruit, and retain quality staff as a direct consequence of the stagnant ASES daily rate, newly enacted quality standards legislation will be challenging to implement.⁴ Research shows that the quality of staff working directly with students is one of the most important factors in the program’s ability to positively impact student outcomes. By not resolving the issue of adequate pay for qualified and well-trained staff, the state is depriving students of high-quality and meaningful learning opportunities. Additionally, the extremely high turnover of staff has a multiplier effect on personnel costs and the ability of programs to keep their doors open.

This survey exemplified that workforce issues are by far the most pressing for the field. Not only does the funding crisis negatively affect staff development, but it also threatens the robust workforce of young and diverse professionals willing and committed to education and community-building – an enormous asset in our field. Many young and talented workers in our publicly-funded programs learn skills and become inspired to join the teaching profession, which is currently experiencing its own recruitment shortfalls. Our expanded learning programs provide a critical supply of new and diverse teachers of the future – a path that is directly threatened.

Increasing wages and benefits – a policy the field wholeheartedly supports - was intended to close equity gaps but the survey demonstrated that there may be unintended consequences in a reduction of hours and benefits. Both the ASES program and increases to the minimum wage are responsibilities of the State Legislature – we must ensure that the same populations these policies seek to support do not shoulder the inadvertent consequences.

³ [The Cost of Quality Out-of-School-Time Programs](#), by The Wallace Foundation, estimates the cost of high-quality after school and summer programs.

⁴ The California Department of Education After School Division approved [Quality Standards](#) for Expanded Learning Programs.

The extremely high and consistent response rate to our survey in such a short period of time clearly demonstrates the **urgency** of this issue across all regions and levels of programs, and most importantly, the need for immediate action. CA3 and partners across the field are supporting both legislative and budget efforts to increase the daily rate to \$8.50/per student. **The success of these efforts relies on the field's involvement.**

Get involved in the statewide campaign to increase the ASES daily rate by **signing up [here](#)** for regular updates on legislative and budget efforts and opportunities to take action.

As stated above, 450 of the 588 respondents took the time to fill in individualized responses about how their programs have been impacted. Of the 450 fill-in responses, 125 (28%) mention quality staff, and 86 (19%) mention student waiting lists. Please see respondent excerpts below to provide a deeper sense of what we heard from the field. While the aggregated data mounts a compelling call to action, the comments we received tell the real story. It is important to remember that these comments do not yet reflect the impending impact of the January 2016 minimum wage increase and the July 1 effective date of the new law requiring a minimum of 3 sick leave days per year.

Negative impacts to students

- **Safety:** “Being the only ride home in the district means 50 students have to walk across a freeway to get home.”
- **Safety:** “Our attendance relies on the ability to provide a quality program. This is difficult to accomplish at times with such tight funds, yet our amazing staff have done their jobs well, which has resulted in a wait list of well over 100 students in our district. Families who desperately need this program are having to rely on siblings (not much older than their younger brothers or sisters) to care for their younger children.”
- **Wait list:** “At my school site, we currently have 96 students, at one point we had 99 students, yet the waiting list is twice the amount of students we have enrolled. I constantly receive calls from parents asking if we have any room open for their child and my answer has numerous times been no.”
- **Wait list:** “Long wait lists 50+ kids, not being able to serve all grade levels, siblings are separated because some can participate and the others can't.”
- **Wait list:** “Current wait lists for 4 sites with average 100 students, relationships with parents and program/school staff have become strained due to the increasing demand for more slots.”
- **Reduced # served:** “For the 2015-2016 school year, we will not be able to maintain current staff levels even with \$0 supply/material money. In order to maintain quality programs and have supplies for students, we will have to reduce services at each site from 100 to 84 students and lay off a staff member. Some of our sites currently have waitlists of 35 students. The reduction in services will increase waitlists to 50 students.”

Staffing

- **Cut hours:** “Due to inadequate funding we have had to cut our coordinators back from a full time (8hrs. with benefits) position to a part-time (3.8hrs with no benefits) position which has drastically affected the quality of staff this position attracts.”

- **Staff retention/quality** : “Specifically in our program we have had MANY quality staff members leave the position due to not being able to offer adequate pay for what is expected in their job description. When we lose quality staff members and have a high turnover rate, the quality of the program lessens.”
- **Staff retention**: “Our individual site has a problem with hiring and maintaining qualified staff. Most employees are college students or youth development professionals, but many leave shortly after being hired. Results from exit interviews show that they leave due to limited hours and low wages; they are simply unable to earn a living wage. These employees are also unable to receive benefits such as vacation, sick, and holiday hours due to the limited funding. Limited hours also hinder planning and prep time.”
- **Losing other grants**: “We are unable to attract quality staff so attendance is negatively affected. One grant was reduced because attendance targets were not met when staff could not be replaced. Staff hours are cut when payroll expenses increase. Staff are not compensated for staff development time on non-work hours. Staff meetings after hours are not held because staff cannot be compensated for their time.”
- **Professional Development**: “Our number one obstacle has been finding extra hours in the budget for the professional development of our staff. While our staff is highly motivated and highly qualified, their practices stagnate over time, and they would benefit from the new strategies and methods that would come with training, workshops, and conferences.”

Reduced coordination with school day

- **No funding for supplies**: “There is NO money for supplies (all funding goes toward salary and benefits). No money for transportation. No money for special events. No money for teachers to coordinate daytime program with after school program.”
- **School Climate**: “In the world of Restorative Practice and Inclusion, we need more staff to support the high-needs students who do receive the support during the daytime. Without money to pay extra staff, we have had to result to punitive measures after unsafe incidents occur, because we do not have the capacity to provide the high-needs students with the attention they deserve.”
- **Certificated teachers**: “We have stopped hiring certificated teachers (adjunct positions) to provide professional leadership for entry level line staff because we cannot adequately compensate them.”
- **School Day Coordination**: “Our organization has had to cut our full time Site Coordinator hours down to meet the financial restraint. As a result, program quality and the ability to align and collaborate with school day staff has become a big challenge. This effects the amount of communication and support we can provide students academically.”

Funding trade-offs

- **\$**: “Each dollar we need to spend on minimum wage increase or negotiated hrly wage change in employee contracts is a dollar that is not available to students for instructional materials, enrichment, physical education, etc. In the past 3 years we have had to increase

salaries by 8.5% and will likely have a retroactive increase through negotiations for another 3-4% this school year.”

- **\$:** “Our staff is very temporary because the hours are short-3.75 and the pay is low- around 10.00 per hour.”
- **Babysitting:** “We are paid less than an untrained babysitter per student, but expected to provide comprehensive enrichment and academic support for hundreds of students. No other program or service is reimbursed so poorly.”

Program Quality

- **Student achievement:** “Using outdated curricular materials not all aligned to CCSS”
- **Physical impact:** “We have not been able to offer additional physical activity and nutrition literacy support that is critical for academic improvement and most of all healthy lifestyles.”
- **Health impact:** “Due to the high rate of diabetes and obesity in our community, we provide healthy cooking activities which, in order to include all of our students, is very expensive. Due to the increases in pay to keep quality staff, we aren't able to afford as much of the healthy cooking as needed.”
- **Substitutes:** “For the past five years, I have had full staff for 25% of the time. Otherwise I have substitutes, reducing the program’s ability to help with homework, practice math skills in the computer lab, and engage students in physical fitness activities.”
- **Student engagement:** “Children become less excited to be in the program because there are no fieldtrips and there are less opportunities to learn outside of the school zone and classroom. They would become more excited if they learned about topics in the classroom and they got hands on or saw how education is used outside of the classroom and in our daily lives.”
- **Student achievement/PD:** “Curriculum support is stretched due to the lack of staff hours for professional development training and limited materials.”
- **ELL:** “Wage increases cut disposable income each year. Fewer field trips, staff training, \$ for transportation, teaching supplies, books, curriculum, even copy paper result. Loss of quality in services to our students and families result. This Spanish-speaking disadvantaged community relies on us to help their students complete homework and expose their students to the wider world.”
- **Rural:** “Due to being in a rural remote area, our district doesn't turn students away, we do not use a waiting list policy. The program operates with fewer staff yet keeps the 20:1 ratio while relying on parent volunteers and teacher help. We take fewer field trips and look for projects with little to no cost.”
- **Ratio:** “We have had to also increase our teacher to student ratio over the years from 1 teacher per 12-15 students to 1 teacher to 20 students. This means less individualized attention and support to students in districts that need it the most.”
- **Supplies:** “We do not get any other funds outside of ASES. This year, we were barely able to hire enough employees to staff the program. We are only able to provide PD if enough staff have missed days so we can pay for an extra day. We dumpster dive in the recycling bins in the copy room for art supplies.”