



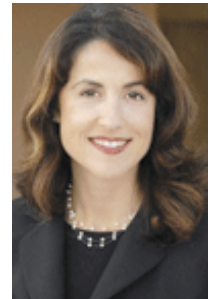
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[Interview with Jennifer Peck \(Partnership for Children and Youth\) on ELT and Future Trends in Afterschool](#)

By Sam Piha

Redefining afterschool programs as “expanded learning time” (ELT) has made its way into discussions regarding the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind and the 21st CCLCs. Below is a brief interview with Jennifer Peck, Executive Director of [The Partnership for Children and Youth](#). Jennifer has been very active in the federal policy discussions regarding 21st CCLCs. Jennifer is a member of the California Work Group for the Learning in Afterschool project. A more complete bio follows this interview.



Q: How do we maximize the opportunities and minimize the threats that ELT presents to afterschool program providers?

A: When it became clear that ELT would be a prominent part of the federal policy conversation around 21st CCLC funding, I was concerned, as were many in the after school field. This thing called “ELT” sounded like more school for more hours and could potentially strip resources from the after school programs for which we have advocated for so long. However, after much examination, thinking, and discussion with colleagues around the country, I have come to view this ELT debate as an opportunity in the following ways:

- *It gives us the opportunity to communicate the fact that after school programs have in fact been extending learning time for students for many years.*
- *If done right, new policies around ELT and 21st CCLC could result in deeper partnerships between schools and their community partners. Right now, we still have a lot of after school programs, located at schools that operate quite separately from the school. If schools have the option to use these dollars for a longer day and/or revised school schedule, strong community partnerships should be supported and required. Community agencies have a stake in children's education and should have a role in the planning and implementation of ELT programs.*

Given the broad interest and political momentum around the need to give students more time, an expansion of our language and ways of doing business are our best shot for growing resources for all types of extended learning opportunities for students.

The absolute bottom line is, what does the "more time" look like? The vast majority of people involved in this debate recognize that additional time can't simply be a longer day, with "more of the same". When 21st CCLC is reauthorized through the ESEA process, it's essential that the law explicitly reinforces what research and experience tell us about high quality programs such as:

- *Requiring that schools partner with community organizations, and that partnerships don't only exist on paper – partners are engaged in planning, implementation, quality improvement and evaluation;*
- *Ensuring that we measure success in meaningful ways, beyond grades and test scores, to assess student engagement and the acquisition of skills we know students will need later in school and in the workplace;*
- *Allowing communities to decide which model of "extended learning time" works best for their students, whether it's after school programs, summer learning programs, a redesigned day, or a combination of the above.*

I'm proud to say that our own Congressman George Miller, Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee and a key advisor to the Administration on education issues, has a strong understanding of what's at stake with an expansion of the 21st CCLC program and of the policies we need in place to both protect high quality after school programming as well as inspire extended day innovations. He will continue to be a key and influential champion of our efforts regardless of which political party takes control of Congress in a few weeks.

Q: How might the Learning in Afterschool principles be useful in framing the ELT conversation?

A: The Learning in Afterschool effort is perfectly aligned and perfectly timed with this federal policy conversation. The LIA principles and language support the very critical task of helping decision makers at all levels understand that after school programs are a place of learning, are worthy of continued and strengthened investments, and can be the foundation for new and innovative models of teaching and learning.

Q: There is always a lot going on in the growing and changing afterschool movement. What is most on your mind right now outside of ELT?

A: I am concerned that we find ways for children in our lowest-income communities to have access to high quality enrichment and learning opportunities all year long, not just during the 180 days of the school year.

A vast majority of our state and federal after school dollars in California are currently allocated to school-year only programs, but students don't stop needing these programs when school closes in June. To the contrary, decades of research tell us that students who don't have access to learning opportunities in the summer are losing significant academic ground from one year to the next, and this phenomenon is cumulative and disproportionately affects low-income children.

Jennifer Peck was a founding staff member of the Partnership in 2001 and became its executive director in 2003. Through her leadership, the Partnership has developed and implemented initiatives to finance and build after-school and summer-learning programs, and increase access to school meals and nutrition education programs in the Bay Area's lowest-income communities. Jennifer leads a coalition of California organizations advocating for new federal policies to improve the effectiveness of after-school and summer-learning programs. To learn more about the Partnership and sign up for their e-newsletter, visit their [website](#).

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