



Pioneering a Professional Pathway in Expanded Learning

How the Partnership for Children & Youth and its Partners Made Registered Apprenticeships a Reality in California Education

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– Aleah Rosario, co-CEO for PCY



Expanded learning is a [proven strategy](#)¹ for improving learning outcomes for children and youth, particularly those in [underserved](#)² communities. Research shows that quality programs after school and outside the school year can increase school attendance, raise test scores, and improve students' overall wellbeing.

Unfortunately, there are not enough programs and resources to meet the growing demand for expanded learning. Nationwide, [it's estimated](#)³ that for every child in an after school program, three are waiting to get in. One reason driving this opportunity gap is the persistent shortages of qualified adults to lead and staff expanded learning programs.

Given that a person who might work in an after school program could earn more working at a Starbucks or for Amazon, the staffing problems are not surprising. Thankfully, California's more than \$4 billion annual investment in [expanded learning](#)⁴, is starting to increase wages and the availability of full-time, benefited roles.

Still, it's hard to find a long-term path forward. Unclear career ladders, required qualifications, and barriers to higher education and professional advancement are persistent challenges. Combined with the lack of competitive wages, these forces have created a brick wall inhibiting the growth of quality programs.

That is where the Partnership for Children & Youth (PCY) is stepping in. Working with several partners, PCY has launched the state's first registered apprenticeship program in expanded learning. Through this pioneering effort, PCY and its partners guarantee that expanded learning apprentices get fair wages with opportunities for raises, free community college tuition, on-the-job training, and real-time, practical support every step of the way.

The PCY-led program is growing a professional workforce for expanded learning and a stepping stone to other careers in education. The program embraces the fact that afterschool staff reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the children and youth they serve. Most members of the initial cohorts actually attended afterschool programs in communities where they now work, which is common among expanded learning staff.

"If we get it right, expanded learning workers will have gained experience, increased wages, and met education goals while being set up to advance in their careers," says Aleah Rosario, co-CEO for PCY. "We are building a model for expanding this into other communities."

"There's great potential in this model because it fits so well with expanded learning," adds kourtney andrada, senior director of school-based programs for Girls Inc. of Alameda County, the employer sponsor of the program. "Expanded learning can be seen as a profession rather than babysitting children after school."

Bringing Registered Apprenticeships to Expanded Learning

Registered apprenticeships provide opportunities for young adults to get paid while they learn a profession. Programs typically are sponsored by local partners who are accountable to state and federal agencies that fund them. Nationwide, there are **more than 850,000 registered apprentices**⁵ in programs that meet standards set by the U.S. Department of Labor, nearly double the number 10 years ago.

Registered apprenticeships have long been a strategy for building career pipelines for the construction trades and firefighting. They are, however, still new and rare in education.

“Expanded learning has relatively low funding compared to trades, thus relies on an immigrant, female-of-color workforce and young adults,” explains Sabrina Kansara, senior program officer for The James Irvine Foundation, which provides grants to support the expanded learning apprenticeship program. “These workers are the

least supported and paid the worst. How do we change that? We provide career ladders, skills training, and a career progression.”

The Irvine Foundation shares the program’s mission to help young people of color navigate barriers they often face when pursuing career and education pathways. “By funding this program, we are making sure that all stakeholders put equity into action and build out more diversity in apprenticeship programs,” Kansara added. “This is very exciting.”

Registered apprenticeships can be an effective strategy for building a pipeline of employees and creating educational and employment opportunities for young adults. But they require serious commitment, coordination, and cross-sector participation. At the very least, an employer and a coursework provider, such as a community college, are required.

Registered Apprenticeships Programs Require Coordination and Flexibility

Registered apprenticeship programs require partners to be flexible in meeting the needs of the apprentices in order to support their success. The expanded learning apprenticeship program is led by partners committed to creating education and career pathways for people of color—particularly those who are the first in their families to go to college. The partners and their roles are:

- **Partnership Children and Youth**⁶, and **Early Care & Education Pathways to Success**⁷: Intermediary organizations that are a bridge between decision-makers and local partners while also providing technical assistance and coordination.
- **Girls Inc. of Alameda County**⁸: Employer that supports registered apprentices with on-the-job training, fair wages and raises, flexible schedules, and advancement opportunities.
- **Berkeley City College**⁹: Higher education institution that aligns schedules and course offerings for registered apprentices in coordination with Girls Inc.
- **The James Irvine Foundation**¹⁰: Philanthropic organization providing seed funding.
- **California Department of Industrial Relations**¹¹: State agency that provides funding and policy guidance for registered apprenticeships.

Through the **California Apprenticeship Initiative**¹², California has allocated \$135 million from FY 2022 through FY 2025 to support its goal of serving 500,000 registered apprentices by 2029. As part of this effort, the state also has stepped up efforts to encourage new sectors, including education, to seek program funds.

That was the opening that PCY needed. Building upon the **recommendations**¹³ developed by the Expanded Learning Workforce Strategy and Workforce Implementation Committees of the California Department of Education Expanded Learning Division, PCY began convening Girls Inc. of Alameda County, Berkeley City College, and the California AfterSchool Network in spring 2022 to design an apprenticeship model for early-career expanded learning workers.

“We were not talking about it anymore. We were moving beyond ideation,” says Rosario. “Here’s how it’s going to be done! Here is how PCY can support the scale and expansion.”



Partners Help Build Momentum

PCY then asked the California nonprofit Early Care & Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) to be its sponsoring partner. ECEPTS had created a registered apprenticeship program for early childhood care and education in 2015. As a sector intermediary, ECEPTS now provides training and technical assistance to 15 early care and education program partnerships in eight counties in California.

“It was an easy decision. We had the model for early child care and education that we were able to apply to expanded learning,” said Randi Wolfe, executive director for ECEPTS.

“People don’t go into expanded learning as a career. So, we want to give them, especially young people of color, solid grounding in child development. A solid apprenticeship program in expanded learning was a good, doable idea.”

Momentum continued to grow. With technical assistance from ECEPTS, the partners developed apprenticeship standards and a coursework sequence, designed new or modified employer partner work processes, reached out to new and incumbent Girls Inc. of Alameda County workers to enroll, and successfully secured \$1.5 million in California Apprenticeship Initiative funding to implement and expand the program. They registered the standards with the federal and state labor departments, and launched the program in February 2023.

“This kind of opportunity should be available to any young adult who wants to work. Working after school or in expanded learning can be an important entry point into a career,” says Rosario. “For young adults interested in a job in the education sector or some other youth-serving work, this should be part of their pathway.”

Apprentices, Welcome to Girls Inc.!

The registered apprenticeship program was a great fit with Girls Inc., the employer sponsor. The program aligned with Girls Inc.'s mission to serve young people in their community. "Luckily for us, we did not have to make many structural changes. We already had a strong training program and investment in paid training for apprentices."

The first cohort of 30 apprentices began in February 2023. Most are women of color and speak English as a second language. They range in age from 19 to 34 years old. Most importantly, they share a passion to work and advance their education and learn how to work with youth.

"Some shared during their interviews that they never thought they could work hard and go to school and be supported," andrada says. "Some wanted to work with youth and didn't have experience, so the apprenticeship was attractive to them."

Apprentices must be available to work after school and in communities from 1-6 p.m. on weekdays. They progress from learning strategies in classrooms to co-facilitating and then independently facilitating their own classes of up to 20 students. The starting wage for apprentices is \$18.50. Statewide, **69 percent**¹⁴ of expanded learning workers are part-time and earn minimum wage or one or two dollars more.

The apprentices enter the program in cohorts. This means they are supported as a group while also learning to support each other. They go through orientation together, get college identification cards together, and register for classes together.



"The instructors come to our space to provide courses so they don't have to travel. We want to make this as accessible as possible," adds andrada.

On the job, apprentices receive weekly training, twice-monthly consultations with managers, mentoring, and tutoring for paraprofessional exams and coursework. But the most critical role might be that of the Success Manager, a staff member who answers questions and addresses crises as they arise. The person in this role helps apprentices navigate challenges ranging from transportation or course selection to paying rent as they transition to the new apprenticeship.

"Our success manager's role is to supply resources and get support within 24 hours," andrada adds. "This role is vital. They have the personal touch with apprentices, help solve problems, and are liaisons with higher education."

Eight months into the launch, the program is exceeding its goal of 80 percent retention. Moreover, there is a feeling that this is just the beginning of something much bigger.

"The intention was not to just start the apprenticeship, but to systematize it and make it replicable," says andrada. "They will have to make organizational shifts, but they won't have to build it from the ground up."



Berkeley Community College Provides Classes and Opportunity to Apprentices

Dr. Joya Chavarin, faculty coordinator at Berkeley City College, knows how important it is to meet young adults where they are.

She was once a young mother working and studying in systems that she didn't always understand. She later drew from those experiences to help launch registered apprenticeships in Head Start programs. Today, she shares her expertise by overseeing the educational component for the expanded learning apprentices.

“We saw the success in Head Start,” Chavarin says. “Expanded learning was a natural next step.”

But it's not a commitment she or her institution take lightly. Instructors are required to go to Girls Inc. to deliver courses to two cohorts, each with 16 students. And they must be attentive to the needs and challenges of students who are the first in their families to attend college, many of whom are trying again after struggling to finish the first time.

“We want to orient the instructors so that they push the students while also holding them up when they succeed,” Chavarin adds. If they finish the two-year apprenticeship, the students will have taken 48 units, or 16 courses, which is enough to earn an associate degree along with the state industry certification.

Apprentices receive free books and laptops. If they have learning differences or IEPs, students might be given extra time on tests or notetakers to document lectures. “These are reasons why people slip through the cracks in K-12. We don't want that to happen here,” Chavarin says.

Listening to student feedback is also important. After students reported that the initial six-week courses went too fast, class offerings were extended to eight weeks and with more tutoring—particularly bilingual tutoring. Weekly meetings with PCY and Girls Inc. also help Chavarin and her staff monitor times when stress or on-the-job demands are particularly high and can affect what happens in the classroom.

As apprentices excel in the classroom, they see that they fit in and believe in a future with more possibilities. “Too many times students who look like us don't get the right advice and take courses that don't count,” Chavarin says. “We give them the right classes at the right time to build a pipeline to become employees in expanded learning or an expedited path to becoming a teacher.”

The apprenticeship program also combines Berkeley City College's goals for students to finish college and land successful employment. “When you have students who enter a degree pathway that leads them to a job, that is a success for the college and the student.”



Learning from Experience to Build for the Future

Rosario, of PCY, hopes the expanded learning registered apprenticeship program will be seen by others as an opportunity to learn from, improve, and expand on a model that can be replicated across the state and the nation. The potential is vast and the opportunity is timely: Building such a movement would professionalize expanded learning to train and retain employees and leaders while also creating a pipeline for other careers in education, including classroom teaching.

“This is part of the pipeline to help someone become an educator or other youth advocate as a career,” says Rosario. “Too many expanded learning professionals must make a choice between work and education. We give them a chance to do both so they can pursue longer-term careers.”

PCY and its partners regularly reflect on and share the lessons learned to guide their next steps and inform others’ efforts. Collectively, increased outreach and communication to potential apprentices and employers will be critical to growth and success. Diversification of funding—particularly private funds for new success manager positions, laptops, and other program materials—is a priority for sustaining programs.

Moving forward, PCY and ECEPTS each plan to coordinate grant proposals and recruit additional employers to expand and launch new programs. Girls Inc. will prioritize workforce development in its organizational planning. Meanwhile, Berkeley City College wants to build a pipeline of flexible and responsive instructors who reflect the communities served by expanded learning programs.



But broader expansion in education, a field not accustomed to registered apprenticeships, will require communicating the hard work that is involved. “Our model is more complicated because of what we are doing. Getting the right people at the table is no small thing,” says Wolfe of ECEPTS. “You have to be ready to challenge the status quo all the way. For example, if an institution of higher education provider is not open to evenings or weekends, they are useless to us.”

Expanding registered apprenticeships will require even more action, both from those who are already deeply involved as well as those just getting started. Below are some calls to action.

Employers should:

- Assess their workforce needs to better understand how registered apprenticeships could play a role in meeting them;
- Connect with the larger apprenticeship community to learn more;
- Assess their readiness and capacity to make the long-term commitment it takes to bring an apprenticeship from conception to reality; and
- Build organizational buy-in for a registered apprenticeship program.

Institutions of higher education should:

- Explore and identify local expanded learning providers with whom they could partner;
- Break down the institutional silos that exist between early childhood education and K-12 education; and
- Build awareness of the importance of competency-based coursework that is delivered on flexible schedules to support students who have previously struggled in higher education.

Intermediaries should:

- Explore existing and potential apprenticeship systems and resources;
- Build greater understanding of employers’ individual and collective needs; and
- Communicate success stories that can inspire and serve as models for others while also pushing policymakers and funders to support registered apprenticeships.

If this can be done right, there is great potential for registered apprenticeships to bring more equity and opportunity to entry into the education workforce, says Kansara of The Irvine Foundation. “We want to see this done well. PCY is a strong model, but new ones will come along and we want to embrace all of these models as long as they are committed to equity, wage support, and sustainability,” she says. “We can change lives and show people what this new career pathway can look like. We need to push and push.”

PCY will continue to facilitate partnerships, coordinate stakeholders, provide technical assistance, and regrant resources so that racial and gender equity are more embedded in the growth of registered apprenticeships in expanded learning. Finally, PCY will leverage its unique history and role working at the intersection of policy and practice. It will promote the apprenticeships as an effective workforce solution to help address the state’s educator recruitment and retention challenges; raise awareness and recognition of expanded learning workforce; and identify and advance policy/system recommendations to increase opportunities for change to women of color and young adults to high-quality career pathways in expanded learning.



Expanded Learning Workers Deserve a Family-Sustaining Wage Structure

The apprenticeship program uses this wage structure, which is one model that makes it possible for an adult to make a career in expanded learning and support a family.

Job Title	Compensation/Hiring Policy
Starting Apprentice	\$18.50/hour
Intervention Specialist	\$20.50/hour, FT position, full medical benefits Apprentices qualify after completing first year of Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)
Assistant Coordinator	\$20.50-\$22.50/hour, FT position, full medical benefits Apprentices qualify after completing RAP
Site Coordinator	\$64,400-\$68,000, FT position, full medical benefits Note: Most employers commit to hiring for these roles from their own workforce, clarifying the pipeline for apprentices to advance into this FT, salaried position
Program Manager	\$70,000-74,000, FT position, full medical benefits Note: Hiring from within their own workforce (or “grow your own”) is valued by many expanded learning employers.
Director	\$85,000-97,000, FT position, full medical benefits

Resources

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Thank you!



About Us

The Partnership for Children & Youth (PCY) is an intermediary organization that has been working for over 20 years to expand access to high-quality expanded learning and wellness opportunities for children in under-resourced communities across the state of California. Grounded in research and experience, we train program providers, facilitate relationships between schools and community-based organizations, and advocate for effective public policies and resources. We are dedicated to a future where all children reach their full potential through equitable access to learning opportunities and supportive, effective schools.

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