



What Are Extended Learning Opportunities?

Learning experiences that lead to intellectual and personal development for students don't always happen in the classroom. Common sense and life experience tell us that learning can happen anywhere and at any time. However, learning experiences that take place outside of the classroom often don't "count" toward students' progress toward a high school diploma. This *Leadership in Action* brief looks at the ways that is changing.

ELOs: Extended Learning Opportunities Outside the Classroom

Increasingly, schools are identifying and putting into practice methods to design, document, and assess meaningful learning experiences that happen outside the classroom. In response to the need for engaging, relevant, and equitable approaches to teaching and learning, schools are finding ways to support and formally recognize student learning that transpires anywhere and at any time.

Across the country, districts have organized such approaches to learning under the category of extended (or expanded) learning opportunities, or ELOs. Broadly speaking, ELOs are learning experiences that take place outside of the classroom—and beyond a traditional course—sequence and allow students to meet graduation expectations. ELOs are:

- **Proficiency-Based:** ELOs allow students to demonstrate learning aligned with the school's graduation expectations, and a student's performance during an ELO is measured by agreed-upon schoolwide criteria for success.
- **Relevant:** ELOs are driven and shaped by students' personal interests, their career aspirations, and the assets available in their communities. ELOs can also be used to formally recognize skills and knowledge students acquire through life experiences separate from school, such as proficiency in a language other than English, or an understanding of bookkeeping acquired while working at a local business.
- **Flexible:** ELOs happen anywhere and at any time. ELOs adapt to students' learning goals, and can take nearly any form. Students can participate in ELOs as a part of a group or on their own. They can vary in scope and be multidisciplinary.
- **Supported by adult community members:** ELOs include both school-based educators and community-based professionals in the planning, execution, and assessment phases.

Want to Know More?

Visit the [Leadership in Action](#) website and download *I Want to Know More*, a selection of information and resources for those interested in reading more about the role of proficiency-based learning in performance assessment

A high-quality education has never been more important than it is right now.

The New England Secondary School Consortium hopes that our *Leadership in Action* series will spark conversations across the region about how students could be learning in today's high schools.

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