

The Long Game: How One Afterschool Intermediary Organization and Its Partners Shaped Policy, Practice and Perception in California

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Cover: Students show their support for afterschool programming in California in 2016.

Photos: p. 6, Arnold Schwarzenegger and children, by Chuck Nacke/Alamy. All other photos, courtesy of the Partnership for Children & Youth.

Design by José Moreno



“Never in my wildest dreams...”

Jennifer Peck, longtime leader of the Partnership for Children & Youth, with Michael Funk, director of the Expanded Learning Division of the California Department of Education at PCY’s 10-year anniversary in 2013

“This is wonderful. We’ve arrived...”

“Cartoon bug eyes...”

When the state of California allocated an unprecedented sum to expand afterschool and summer learning opportunities for young people—\$4.6 billion in one-time relief funding in its 2021-2022 budget, followed by an additional \$3.4 billion in permanent funding in 2022-2023—reactions among afterschool providers and advocates ranged from cautious optimism to satisfaction to disbelief. Amanda Reedy, administrator of the Gilroy Unified School District’s afterschool program, says her first thought when she heard the news was, “Go, Jennifer! PCY is getting it done.”

“ PCY works where policy, practice, and public awareness meet.”



Jennifer Peck and the Partnership for Children & Youth (PCY), the organization Peck co-founded 25 years ago, have played a critical behind-the-scenes role in creating the conditions that led to California’s massive funding commitment to expanded learning, the umbrella term for programs that take place before school, after school, between semesters, and during the summer. As Michael Funk, director of the Expanded Learning Division of the California Department of Education, puts it: “PCY and Jennifer cleared out the space for the garden plot and got the soil and the seeds.”

PCY is a statewide intermediary, an organization that works with various players—including city agencies, private funders, schools, program providers—to create more and better expanded learning experiences for young people. *[For more, see sidebar on p. 5: “What Statewide Expanded Learning Intermediaries Do.”]* It is considered a shining example of its kind. Danica Petroschius, managing principal of the Penn Hill Group, a Washington, D.C.-based lobbying and consulting firm that specializes in education policy and counts PCY among its clients, says that “people in the field look to [Peck] for leadership and mentoring.” Jessica Donner, who heads Every Hour Counts, a national network of local and regional intermediaries to which PCY belongs, calls the Partnership “an exemplar for how a statewide intermediary could identify concrete local challenges and advocate for solutions through local and state policy change.” Moreover, she says “from its early years, Every Hour Counts has looked to PCY to strengthen our coalition’s voice in federal policy.”

If this conjures up an image of a Goliath with unlimited resources and a legion of staffers plotting strategy in a board room overlooking the State Capitol, think again. Originally based in Oakland, PCY made the decision to go virtual even before the pandemic started. Its seven-member staff is spread across the state (Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Stockton), with monthly in-person meetings rotating from location to location. The staff has fluctuated in number over the years according to the organization’s needs and priorities and is supported by a network of partners and consultants. About a quarter to a third of its funding comes from contracts with the state and other public entities, the rest from foundation grants.¹

Peck describes the work of PCY as positioned at the intersection of policy, practice, and public awareness. Throughout its history, the organization has sought to do what the moment called for, whether it was working to draft and advance legislation to make sure new funding for afterschool was used effectively and equitably, helping to foster programs to serve as models for the field, or coordinating a coalition to press publicly and in the halls of government to keep expanded learning front and center in California’s progressive political calculus.

Petroschius says that conditions in California have been more favorable to expanded learning than elsewhere in the nation. “It’s so far ahead that some people say, ‘Wow, my state could never be that.’” Nonetheless, she believes there’s much to learn from PCY’s story about what is possible for a savvy, persistent statewide intermediary to achieve—and how to go about it.

Here, then, are some pivotal moments in PCY’s story, and in the broader story of expanded learning in California, with insights from Peck herself, along with a few of her key partners and fellow change agents.

But first the backstory...

¹ PCY has received about \$350,000 in grants from The Wallace Foundation since 2016. The first grant covered PCY’s participation in the foundation’s social and emotional learning initiative; the second supported the development of an organizational sustainability plan; and the most recent, in 2020, was part of the pandemic aid the foundation provided to a range of organizations across its fields of interest.

FINDING INSPIRATION IN AFTERSCHOOL

Jennifer Peck's involvement in the afterschool field began when she was working in the U.S. Department of Education as a political appointee of the Clinton administration, splitting her time between D.C. and the department's regional office for the Western states in San Francisco. In the mid-1990s, she was assigned to visit some of the first grantees of a fledgling program called the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). 21st CCLC was established by Congress in 1994 with an initial budget of just \$750,000 and a goal of creating "centers of activity" in rural and urban communities that would provide a wide range of services to both young people and adults. As 21st CCLC evolved over the Clinton years and beyond, its budget grew (to more than \$800 million in 2001 and more than \$1.2 billion in 2022) and its purpose became more focused: to enable high-poverty and low-performing schools to establish afterschool and summer programs that help students meet academic standards, offer them enriching activities like art and sports, and provide literacy and other educational services to their families. It remains the only federal funding source exclusively dedicated to expanded learning.²

Petroschius says that the program's advent marked a major shift in the perception of, and discourse about, afterschool. "Before Clinton was elected, afterschool was known as Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-H, the big brand names," she says. "It was almost not even a part of education. If there was funding, it was more on the juvenile justice or community services side of the ledger."

The early days of 21st CCLC were a personal turning point for Peck, as well. She recalls going to see a grantee in Sonoma County, Calif., and being struck by what she saw. "They were creating opportunities for kids from very under-resourced communities that looked so fun and engaging. And the adults seemed happy. It was just really inspiring." The more she got to know providers and experts in the field, the more convinced she became that afterschool and summer learning were a "must-have."

"It helped me connect to my own experience growing up in Southern California and how much my out-of-school-time opportunities meant to me," she says. Peck's parents, a college professor and graduate student, didn't have much money but were resourceful when it came to their daughter's enrichment. She took tennis lessons, went to dance and orchestra recitals, and spent some summers at the local Girls Club (now Girls, Inc.), where she learned baton twirling and bonded with her counselors.

"The exposure to people and places, the opportunities to build social capital, build skills and develop relationships, that's what it's all about," she says. "Access to these things for many kids is the difference in how they engage in school or not and what they get out of school or not."

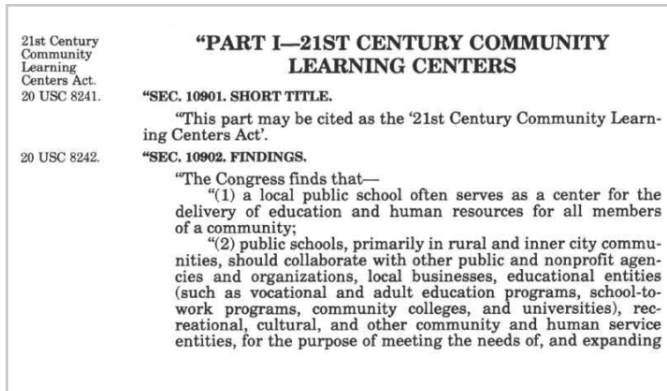


Jennifer Peck speaks during Summer Learning Day at the State Capitol in Sacramento in June 2012.

² Olkovsy, Anna, "A Brief History of 21st Century Community Learning Centers," Afterschool Alliance, 2012. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolSnack/A-Brief-History-of-21st-Century-Community-Learning-Centers_06-25-2012.cfm

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP CAPITAL

As she visited communities on behalf of the Clinton administration, Peck also began to learn about some of the obstacles preventing them from providing the kinds of horizon-expanding out-of-school experiences she had benefited from as a young person. According to her supervisor and mentor at the U.S. Department of Education, Loni Hancock, “We found out when we worked on the first [21st CCLC] grant cycles coming out of Washington that many of our lowest-income schools were not applying for the money.”



Portion of the 1994 federal law that created the 21st Century Community Learning Center program

At the time, Hancock and Peck were part of an initiative aimed at addressing poverty in the Bay Area led by the United Way and involving a broad array of players from local, state, and federal government; the philanthropic sector; and the business community. One of Hancock and Peck’s contributions was to conduct focus groups with education leaders in the region to find out what they saw as the most pressing issues. The answer was twofold: Students were coming to school hungry, and they had nowhere safe to go in the hours when they weren’t in school. To help hard-hit communities tackle these problems, Hancock and Peck joined forces with the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. Together, they presented 21st CCLC, along with federal funding for school breakfast, after-school snacks, and other needs, as a potential solution.

Peck describes the eye-opening responses she got from local officials: “We would say, ‘There’s these new federal resources. You should be applying for them. It could really, really help address the challenges [in your community].’ And what we consistently heard was, ‘Number one, we had no idea those resources were available.’ And then when they learned about them, they said, ‘There’s no way we have the capacity to apply for those funding sources. We don’t have a grant writer. You’re requiring us to come up with matching funds and partner MOUs and RFPs that are 50 pages long.”

As President Clinton’s second term in office was winding down, Peck’s time in the federal government came to a close, but her work nurturing afterschool programs was just beginning. A small group of participants in the United Way’s anti-poverty initiative, including Hancock and Peck, saw the need for a more focused, action-oriented effort. Together, they founded the Bay Area Partnership in 1997. Hancock—who had been mayor of Berkeley for eight years before her stint in Washington, D.C.—served on the board of directors along with other local leaders in government, business, and philanthropy. Peck was only one of two staff members; the other, Erin Gabel, had been her intern at the Department of Education. Their pay was minimal. When the Partnership was granted 501(c)3 status five years later, Peck officially became the organization’s executive director, Gabel its deputy director. Peck says, playfully, she got the senior position “because I was 10 years older.”

The new nonprofit’s first project was to conduct an extensive analysis of neighborhoods throughout the region and identify those that had the biggest need for funding from the 21st CCLC and federal school breakfast programs but lacked the time, resources, and expertise to successfully apply on their own. It then “donated” grant writers and technical assistance providers to fill the gap.

The connections Peck and Hancock had made representing the federal government in the Bay Area gave the Partnership a leg up when it came to fundraising. “I basically capitalized on those relationships to build my own relationships in reaching out to funders,” Peck says. With support from key area philanthropies like the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the San Francisco Foundation, the Partnership’s grant writing project resulted in 54 new school

breakfast programs in the first two years alone and ultimately brought in more than \$90 million in public funding for local programs from 2000 to 2012.

As successful as the effort was, Peck understood that even a small army of grant writers was not enough to ensure that every community received the resources it deserved. In 1997, just as Peck was launching the Bay Area Partnership, California for the first time allocated \$50 million in state funds for school-based afterschool programs.³ And in 2002, the 21st CCLC program was restructured such that federal dollars were no longer distributed to local applicants but to the states, which then made decisions about grant awards.⁴ Therefore, to effectively help communities tap into those funding sources, the Partnership would need to have a seat at the table with the lawmakers and officials in Sacramento, California's capital city, who shaped the state's afterschool policies.

Again, Peck's background in government served her well. She had already established credibility with state policymakers in her role with the U.S. Department of Education, which involved conveying the federal perspective on where and how the new state funds for afterschool should be allocated. She is quick to credit the politically experienced Hancock with opening doors. "It was pretty easy to get meetings with state leaders at that time," she says. "I think they listened to me sometimes because of Loni and sometimes because we were the 'feds.'"

That dialogue continued after Peck and Hancock made the move to the nonprofit world. Drawing on their experience with 21st CCLC, including the feedback they'd gotten from local leaders about the difficulties of applying, they advised state brass on issues like how much time communities should be given to complete grant applications and the importance of involving community-based organizations in the design and operation of afterschool programs.

According to Jeff Sunshine, who oversaw the Packard Foundation's afterschool and summer learning grantmaking portfolio from 2007 to 2020, the foundation valued the way the Partnership was able to serve as a bridge between the worlds of local providers and state policymakers. "Jennifer was a leader who really understood the field, helped to create it, and was working the politics in Sacramento around that," Sunshine says. He notes that Packard saw supporting the Partnership's advocacy efforts as a way to "ripen the soil" for a broader investment in afterschool down the line.

Even as the Partnership beefed up its technical assistance work—the communities it had helped secure 21st CCLC grants now needed guidance on how to build their programs—Peck realized that, by making its presence felt in the state capital, it was having an impact in parts of California where it had no footprint on the ground. The organization wouldn't start calling itself the Partnership for Children & Youth until 2009, and officially shed the name the Bay Area Partnership until 2010, but by 2001 it had already started to reposition itself as a champion for afterschool programs statewide.

3 "AAV of CA Publicly Funded After School Programs," California State Board of Education, 2014. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/memossssbasdjun14item01a1aav.asp>

4 Olkovsy.

What Statewide Expanded Learning Intermediaries Do

Statewide nonprofit expanded learning intermediaries were first organized on a national scale in 2002, when the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation launched its Statewide Afterschool Network initiative, according to Erik Peterson, senior vice president of policy at the nonprofit Afterschool Alliance. There are currently Mott-funded "afterschool networks" in all 50 states, as well as about a half dozen other statewide intermediaries, of which the Partnership for Children and Youth is one.

The role of these organizations varies from state to state, but Peterson says they all to some degree foster cooperation among various players with a stake in afterschool, including government agencies, school districts, philanthropy, and the business community, and advocate for policies that make afterschool and summer programs better, more accessible, and more sustainable. Many also communicate and raise public awareness on behalf of program providers, connect them with training and coaching, collect and analyze data, and create opportunities for them to meet and learn from one another. Their work touches on a range of salient topics in the fields of education and youth development, including social and emotional learning, STEM, juvenile justice, and college and workforce readiness.

Danica Petroschius, managing principal of the Washington, D.C.-based lobbying and consulting firm the Penn Hill Group, which specializes in education policy, calls statewide intermediary organizations, "conveners, collaborators, coalition builders...and leaders in advocacy because they can look across all that's going on in programs and policy in a way that individual programs may not be able to." Conversely, she notes that state and local officials often view intermediaries as "closer to the ground" than government agencies are and therefore better equipped to make decisions about which providers should receive public funds and to oversee the use of those funds.



Arnold Schwarzenegger, elected governor of California in 2003, speaks with children during his campaign for Prop. 49 in October 2002.

SIZING UP A NEW PLAYER WITH A BIG PROPOSITION

At the same time the Partnership was making its name as a respected voice in California's after-school movement, another player was arriving on the scene, bringing major change with him.

Arnold Schwarzenegger had a long history with afterschool programs. Soon after being appointed chairman of President George H.W. Bush's Council on Physical Fitness in 1990, the action-movie superstar co-founded a foundation to raise money for programs in Los Angeles and started one of his own, Arnold's All-Stars. More than a decade later, with Schwarzenegger considering a run for governor, his advisers began to explore the possibility of a ballot initiative that would give him a signature issue, rally public support, and help him build a coalition of political allies.

In the 18 months leading up to the 2002 election, they carefully crafted the initiative, enlisting experts, conducting polling to gauge public opinion, courting key stakeholders, and raising funds for a campaign (including \$1 million of Schwarzenegger's own money). The result was Proposition 49, which asked voters to support a more than \$400-million increase in state funding for before- and afterschool programs, making it possible for every school in the state to establish its own program. The increase would be paid for by growth in state revenue, not tax increases. Prop. 49 passed with about 57 percent of the vote.⁵ Schwarzenegger was elected governor a year later.

⁵ O'Hara, Erin C., "Winning Combinations: The Passage of Prop. 49," Afterschool Alliance, pp. 1-5. https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/prop_49_paper.pdf

The coalition that Schwarzenegger brought together in support of Prop. 49 was broad, encompassing law enforcement, teacher associations, mayors, and even the AARP.⁶ The Bay Area Partnership, while part of a group of afterschool advocates and leaders that provided input on the specifics of the proposition, ultimately declined to endorse it. “We fundamentally did not believe it was smart public policy or responsible budgeting to pass an initiative for half a billion dollars that had no funding source attached to it,” Peck says. “There was no tax, there was no bond. It was necessarily going to take resources away from other things in the public education system...I have a lot of admiration for [Schwarzenegger], but Prop. 49 happened to us in a way rather than by us as a field.”

Once it passed, however, the Partnership shifted gears, determined to ensure that high-needs communities got the biggest possible bang for the coming influx of bucks. The Schwarzenegger team’s polling had found that voters were uninterested in the intricacies of afterschool policy, so in drafting Prop. 49 they had proposed no changes to the state’s existing afterschool program and kept the discussion of policy specifics to a minimum throughout the campaign.⁷ Peck knew the devil was in the details, and to the extent that the details of Prop. 49 had been worked out, they had yet to face sufficient scrutiny.

Time was on the Partnership’s side. Because Prop. 49 relied on an increase in state revenue to cover the increase in funding for afterschool, the funds would not be released until revenue actually rose above a predetermined threshold. That didn’t happen until 2006-2007, four years after the proposition became law.⁸ “It was a bit of a waiting game,” Peck says.

SHAPING AND SHEPHERDING LEGISLATION

During that time, the action on afterschool policy moved from the ballot box to the state legislature, and Peck made sure the Partnership was in the mix. While continuing its work supporting local providers, the organization got involved in drafting and pushing forward pieces of legislation intended to fine-tune California’s administration of 21st CCLC and the state’s own afterschool program. This allowed the Partnership to hone its bill-writing chops and build a reputation as a reliable resource to legislators on afterschool issues.

Once again, Hancock proved a crucial ally. She had decided to return to politics, winning a seat in the State Assembly in 2002, the same year Prop. 49 passed. Hancock, of course, was intimately familiar with the Partnership and knew it was a dependable source of information on the issues facing the afterschool field. “One of the things you really rely on as a legislator are the groups you trust that have made it their business to know everything about an issue you want to work on...It’s the eyes and ears on the ground that advocacy groups can really bring.”

In the lead-up to the release of the Prop. 49 funds, Peck dedicated herself to forging similar working relationships with other key legislators. “You have to pound the pavement in the Capitol, walk the halls, go to offices, meet with staff,” she says. “We did a ton of that.” The most critical of those relationships was with Tom Torlakson, a long-time assemblyman who’d been elected to the State Senate in 2004. Torlakson represented the district where Peck lived, and

6 O’Hara, p. 6.

7 O’Hara, p. 7.

8 “Proposition 49: The After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program,” California Afterschool Network, accessed on 5/4/22. <https://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/post/proposition-49-after-school-education-and-safety-ases-program>

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**Prop. 49, to
boost afterschool
programming,
won with 57
percent of
the vote**

she'd gotten to know him and his staff by volunteering on some of his campaigns. Torlakson, a senior member of the senate education committee, had been a science teacher and cross-country and track coach, so he was a natural ally for the Partnership. "He got what was important about programs and was willing to dive in," Peck says.

In 2006, the Partnership learned that the state had hit the revenue threshold for Prop. 49, and the new money would be going out the door the following year. It had prepared by soliciting input from advocates and practitioners working in the field about the initiative. These conversations uncovered three major problems. For starters, the funding allocated under Prop. 49 was enough to grant every elementary and middle school in the state \$50,000. The amount was based on a \$5-per-child-per-day formula that was an artifact of the early years of the state's existing afterschool program. But the cost of living had risen in the nearly 10 years since the program was established, and \$50,000 wasn't enough to do afterschool right. Moreover, there was the question of equity: Should a school in affluent Beverly Hills receive the same-sized grant as a school in impoverished South Central L.A.?

Finally, there was the matter of accountability. The Schwarzenegger administration wanted to use test scores as one of the metrics for determining whether Prop. 49 dollars were being used effectively. But the Partnership had relationships with researchers and youth development experts who insisted this had the potential to do more harm than good: An emphasis on boosting test scores could take attention away from other important outcomes of afterschool programs like forming healthy relationships and picking up new skills. The focus should instead be on defining the elements of a high-quality program and making sure grantees put those elements in place.



**A big question
was how to
distribute Prop.
49 dollars
equitably.**

After conducting an analysis to figure out what changes could be made to the initiative through legislation, the Partnership decided to concentrate its efforts on these three main concerns: the inadequate daily per-child rate, the inequity of giving schools in well-to-do communities the same-sized grants as schools in under-resourced communities, and the use of test scores as an accountability metric. The Partnership collaborated with Torlakson's staff on legislation that would address these issues, but because the senator's staff was small and the Partnership had a more granular understanding of the relevant details, the Partnership took on much of the drafting with the help of a consultant who had been a legislative fellow. These sessions went late into the night.

All that work would amount to nothing more than words on paper without buy-in from Torlakson's colleagues in the legislature. The Partnership zeroed in on members of the committees that would have the biggest say in what happened to the bill—education, appropriations, and budget—as well as anyone it anticipated would have objections. Peck tailored her pitch to what each member cared about. In her discussions with Republicans—who were in the minority but had a bigger presence in California's statehouse than they do today—she would emphasize the benefits of afterschool programs in preventing crime, bringing in the Partnership's allies in law enforcement and concerned constituents to help make the case.

Torlakson and the Partnership met with little opposition to the idea of redirecting resources to the neighborhoods with the greatest need and raising the daily rate from \$5 per child to \$7.50 per child. Their proposal to drop test scores as a measure of programs' success was another story. In this case, the stiffest resistance came not from the state assembly or the state senate but straight from the top.



“The accountability battle got really intense,” Peck recalls. “Those were the first days I ever had to go into meetings in the governor’s office, and I was so scared. Tom and I would have to go in there and have these tense conversations with the governor’s staff. We would have to steel ourselves to be tough and firm about what we wanted to happen.”

In the end, that fortitude—along with all the time put into walking the halls of the Capitol and winning over legislators—paid off. The governor relented. Standardized test scores would be only one of a number of measures afterschool programs could choose from to demonstrate their effectiveness: Evidence that students were completing their homework, developing new skills, and showing signs of positive behavioral changes would also be accepted.⁹

Peck says she doesn’t know exactly what the deciding factor was. “We were so small at that time. We’d done very little organizing around the state. And I would by no means have called myself an expert in negotiating these issues back then. But I think we were incredibly determined about how right we were. Our core group of provider and youth organization partners did just enough letter writing. We had the right people in the legislature on our side. And I think there was some [horse] trading I’ll probably never know about that happened behind the scenes, as it always does, between some of the members we were working with and the governor’s office.”

Senate Bill 638, spelling out how the state of California would distribute new afterschool funding equitably and effectively, was signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in September 2006. Peck acknowledges that Schwarzenegger’s pollsters had it right: the nuts and bolts of implementation

Jennifer Peck with Tom Torlakson, then-superintendent of public instruction in California and chair of the Summer Matters campaign, at the State Capitol during Summer Learning Day in June 2013

⁹ “Senate Bill No. 638 – California,” p. 11. http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/05-06/bill/sen/sb_0601-0650/sb_638_bill_20060921_chaptered.pdf



‘We would have to steel ourselves to be tough,’ Peck says.

Senate Bill No. 638

CHAPTER 380

An act to amend Sections 8421, 8422, 8423, 8425, 8426, 8427, 8428, 8482.3, 8482.55, 8483, 8483.1, 8483.2, 8483.3, 8483.55, 8483.75, 8484, 8484.8, and 8484.9 of, to add Sections 8421.5 and 8482.4 to, and to repeal and amend Sections 8482.5 and 8483.7 of, the Education Code, relating to before and after school programs, making an appropriation therefor, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor September 21, 2006. Filed with Secretary of State September 21, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

SB 638, Torlakson. Before and after school programs.

(1) Existing law, the 21st Century High School After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens program (ASSETs act), provides that the purpose of the program is to create incentives for establishing locally driven after school enrichment programs that partner schools and communities to provide academic support and safe, constructive alternatives for high school pupils in the hours after the regular schoolday. The ASSETs act, commencing with the 2006–07 fiscal year, requires a program to comply with the State Department of Education’s requirements for hours and days of program operation. Existing law requires an applicant for a grant to run a program pursuant to the ASSETs act to meet specified requirements.

This bill would provide that an additional purpose of the program is to assist pupils in passing the high school exit examination. The bill would require a program to operate for a minimum of 15 hours per week. The bill would revise the requirements that a grant applicant is required to meet.

The bill would require the department to provide notice to schools eligible for grants, as specified, and would impose additional requirements on the department with respect to review of grant applications. The bill would require a specified committee to make recommendations to the department and the Legislature with respect to reporting requirements for high school programs operating pursuant to the ASSETs act, as specified. The bill would require the department to review the recommendations and present them to the State Board of Education, and would require the state board to adopt regulations for program evaluation and review, as specified.

(2) The ASSETs act imposes requirements for priority funding, and requires the department to consider specified criteria in awarding grants pursuant to the ASSETs act.

This bill would revise those priorities and criteria.

(3) The ASSETs act provides that a grantee that establishes a program pursuant to the ASSETs act is eligible to receive a 5-year grant, subject to

Excerpt from California Senate Bill 638, which spelled out how the state would distribute new afterschool funding, signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in September 2006

Even after she returned to PCY full-time, Peck remained a trusted adviser to Funk and to the superintendent throughout his two four-year terms. She also cultivated relationships with staffers that have continued to bear fruit in the years since. She says she was judicious about leaning on Torlakson for assistance once he became superintendent, but when PCY needed his backing, she was able to approach him for support with confidence. Peck’s first big ask after Torlakson

aren’t as sexy as a ballot initiative that allots hundreds of millions to a popular cause. “Not to most people,” anyway, she says.

Peck calls it one of the Partnership’s proudest moments, but the organization didn’t try to trumpet its accomplishment to the broader public. The broader public, for the most part, had never been its audience. “Our partners in the field knew what we did and knew the lift that it was,” Peck says. The Partnership did hold a celebration in Sacramento and made a point of giving credit to the many associates who’d had a hand in shaping and shepherding the bill. “We needed our funders to know what we were able to accomplish because we needed to continue to raise money. We also needed folks in the legislature to understand we were a good organization to work with.”

ADVISING STATE LEADERS

One person who recognized as well as anyone what Peck and the Partnership could do was Tom Torlakson. When he was elected state superintendent of public instruction in 2010, making him the top education official in California, he chose Peck to serve as the director of his transition team, a role that involved fundraising for the team’s operations, gathering input from members of the team and making sure their voices were heard, helping iron out details such as staffing structure at the state department of education, and advising Torlakson on policy matters. Peck went on part-time leave from her organization, which by this point had formally changed its name from the Bay Area Partnership to the Partnership for Children & Youth, but she still brought her perspective as an advocate to the team:

“I was often the afterschool expert in the room, so I would make sure it was represented in the appropriate places...It’s an opportunity for someone in a position like mine you don’t pass up, because of all the reverberating benefits that could come of such a thing,” she says.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of Peck’s involvement with the transition team was the creation of a new afterschool division within the department of education, which had been a PCY priority since the 2006 passage of the implementing legislation for Prop. 49. Up to that point, afterschool had been a small unit inside of another division, one that, in Peck’s view, didn’t have enough staff or clout to deal with a post-Prop. 49 reality.

Once Torlakson took office, Peck reached out to Michael Funk, the founder and executive director of Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center, an afterschool program provider in San Francisco. She encouraged him to apply to lead the new division. “Working in state government wasn’t on my bucket list,” Funk recalls. “[Peck said], ‘I’ll do anything to help you succeed, short of driving the moving truck to Sacramento, and partner with you all along the way.’”

took office was for him to serve as chairman of Summer Matters, a new statewide initiative that would call on PCY to delve deeper than ever into the realms of policy, practice, and public awareness campaigns.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF SUMMER

The Partnership spent much of 2007 conducting workshops around California to get the word out about the coming surge of state funding for afterschool and make sure communities were ready to apply. One of the questions that consistently came up in these sessions was, “What about summer?” That same year, researchers at Johns Hopkins published the results of a study indicating that, by 9th grade, the so-called “summer slide”—the loss of academic skills and content knowledge that students experience over summer break—accounts for two-thirds of the gap in reading scores between students from low-income families and their more affluent peers. They also found that students most affected by the summer slide were more likely to drop out of high school and less likely to attend college.¹⁰ And yet none of the new funding made available under Prop. 49 could be used for summer programming. Peck came to the conclusion that summer was the next frontier for the Partnership’s work.

The brain trust at the Packard Foundation, one of the Partnership’s original funders, was thinking along similar lines. The well-being of children had been a long-standing priority for the foundation, with a particular emphasis on exposing young people to the great outdoors. When Packard decided to make a major investment in summer programs, it brought together its afterschool grantees to participate in the planning. Jeff Sunshine, Packard’s point person for afterschool and summer learning at the time, had kept a close eye on the Partnership as it established itself as both a leading advocate for the afterschool field and a provider of hands-on assistance to communities looking to get new programs off the ground. He invited the organization to be Packard’s main partner in this new endeavor.

“They basically helped co-create it with me. And then they became the intermediary that really was the backbone of that initiative,” Sunshine says.

Summer Matters got underway in 2009. The Great Recession had hit the year before, hobbling state and local budgets. Rather than derailing the initiative, the unfavorable economic conditions helped Packard and the Partnership, now calling itself PCY, set their course. “Our work became about setting the stage and preparing ourselves for the moment we actually could strike,” Peck says.

Setting the stage meant spreading the message to policymakers and the public that summer was an important time for young people’s learning and development. It also meant incubating model programs that could serve as proof points for what was possible—namely, a shift from the traditional summer school model, with its emphasis on remediation, to “summer learning” programs that provide a mix of engaging academics and enrichment.



**‘What about summer?’
program providers asked.**

¹⁰ Alexander, K. L., Entwisle D. R., & Olson L. S., “Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap.” *American Sociological Review*, 72, 2007, pp. 167–180. A more recent consensus study paints a more nuanced picture. What is clear is that “the influence of summer on academic trajectories is worse for children and youth from lower-income families, communities, and schools” and that “research consistently finds evidence of differential outcomes for students based on family income.” What is less clear, however, is whether this is due to greater losses, or slighter gains. See Sepúlveda, Martín-José, Hutton, Rebekah (Eds.), *Shaping Summertime Experiences: Opportunities to Promote Healthy Development and Well-Being for Children and Youth*, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25546>.



Summer Matters worked to incubate model programs.

Three communities were chosen as pilot program sites in the first year of the initiative. Over the course of three years, the cohort grew to 12, representing different regions of the state, rural and urban. Each program involved a partnership between a school district and one or more community-based organizations, with a focus on literacy and physical health. Packard brought in the California State Parks Foundation and the California State Library Foundation to supplement the programs' local resources, setting them up to offer a wide-ranging menu of enriching activities.

FOSTERING MODEL PROGRAMS

One of PCY's central tasks was to guide the design and operation of these pilot programs, to ensure that, in Sunshine's words, they "were not just putting kids on a basketball court with a basketball and a person with a whistle." PCY not only coordinated the technical assistance to the participating communities but also documented all the specific decisions that went into planning and running their programs, such as the division of responsibility between school and community organization staff, and tracked their progress in putting in place key elements of quality as they had been spelled out in the initiative design, including helping children build skills and fostering cooperative learning.

To do the latter, the effort enlisted the help of the National Summer Learning Association, a non-profit organization that had been involved in Summer Matters from the outset. The association had developed its own tool to assess program quality and trained the initiative's technical assistance providers to use it. These assessments, which took place each summer, identified the pilot programs' strengths and weaknesses, serving as the basis for learning and improvement. PCY also monitored student attendance and, in 2012, about halfway through the seven-year project, brought in an outside evaluator to determine whether participation in Summer Matters programs in three communities—L.A., Sacramento, and Fresno—produced gains in reading achievement. It did: Students ended the summer with vocabulary skills much closer to grade level, with English Language Learners getting a statistically significant boost.¹¹

The city of Gilroy in Northern California was one of the three original communities selected for the initiative. PCY had helped the Gilroy Unified School District apply for 21st CCLC and state funding back when it was still the Bay Area Partnership. Amanda Reedy, a former teacher and data specialist, had only recently taken over as the administrator of the district's afterschool program when the invitation to participate in Summer Matters came in. She describes how Katie Brackenridge, PCY's then-vice president of programs, walked her through the process of building and running a summer program step by step.

"I was a teacher. I didn't really know much about this world," Reedy says. "Trying to understand indirect rates and costs...my head was spinning. Katie literally came in and supported me in learning how programs should work. She asked questions about how our summer the year before had gone, like, 'What was the theme and how was it organized? What were your learning goals?'"

¹¹ *Summer Matters: How Summer Learning Strengthens Students' Success*, Public Profit, 2016, p. 17. <https://summermatters.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Summer-Matters-How-Summer-Learning-Strengthens-Students-Success.pdf>

Brackenridge also advised Reedy on how to navigate the district's relationships with the three community-based organizations it had contracted with to run the program, helping her think through "how we bring these three agencies together so that each agency is seen for who they are and what they bring," Reedy says. "She even did team building and leadership development with my staff and my partner agencies and asked us how much professional development time the staff had and how much time they had to meet."

Brackenridge, along with representatives of the National Summer Learning Association, went to Gilroy the first summer of the initiative to demonstrate how to use the organization's quality assessment tool. Reedy recalls one particularly momentous piece of feedback that came out of that visit:

"We had been operating like we did during the school year where one staff member had their 20 kids and were with them all day long," she says. Brackenridge and her National Summer Learning Association colleagues went over the assessment data with Reedy and her staff. It showed that they needed to change their approach. "The staff were trying to take kids through the nature and the literacy and the STEM, all these different components [of the program], and they couldn't do a quality job of any of it because they were masters of none."

By the following week, the Gilroy team had completely overhauled its gameplan, assigning each program instructor a content area and rotating students among them over the course of the day. "The staff were so mad at first," Reedy says. "I thought we were going to lose people. And in the end, everybody was so glad we made the change. Everything drastically improved after that. I feel blessed that we had that level of support."

Just as Packard and PCY had intended, Gilroy's summer program became an exemplar that providers and decisionmakers throughout the region could learn from. Reedy explains that Packard staff's annual site visits—which she initially viewed as "this stressful thing"—evolved over time into a showcase attended by the local superintendent, fellow program providers, representatives from other communities, and members of the legislature. The program is still going strong today, six years after Summer Matters ended.

TELLING THE STORY OF SUMMER LEARNING

These site visits were a key component of what both Peck and Sunshine describe as "storytelling," crafting and disseminating a compelling narrative about what high-quality summer programs look like and what benefits they bring for students, families, schools, and communities. To get the news media interested in that narrative, PCY hired the public relations firm PR & Company, which came up with an unexpected angle to hook reporters: In the first year of the initiative, the firm convinced a hesitant PCY to adopt the message that summer was "a dangerous time for kids" because of the potential for learning loss and physical inactivity. The tactic worked, resulting in dozens of stories that sounded the alarm while also presenting summer learning programs as a solution to the problem. Each year, the campaign adjusted its message to keep summer learning in the public eye.

The PR firm also persuaded PCY to put on a major public event, something it had never attempted before. Piggybacking on NSLA's National Summer Learning Day, the Summer Matters campaign held a rally at the State Capitol in Sacramento on the first day of June 2009. Two hundred middle schoolers from across the state attended, along with lawmakers and the state

“
PCY gave
step-by-step
guidance on
building strong
programming.”



200 middle-schoolers attended the first Summer Matters rally in Sacramento



Graphic from The Summer Game Plan, a virtual workshop series started by PCY in February 2021 to help districts gear up for a return to in-person summer programming

programs for low-income students and another, sponsored by Peck's mentor Loni Hancock, that, among other provisions, gave funding priority to schools that included summer learning in their plans.

PCY also advocated successfully with the state department of education, led by her ally Tom Torlakson. Torlakson, who had agreed to chair the Summer Matters campaign, spoke publicly of summer programming as an integral part of the state's education system, while the department adopted quality standards for both afterschool and summer and built its own capacity to collect data on summer programs and offer technical assistance to providers.

About halfway through the initiative, however, California radically changed the way it financed public schools, shifting the vast majority of the decision-making authority to local superintendents and school boards. PCY had to recalibrate its advocacy strategy accordingly. Peck's team soon realized that local leaders were much more likely to consider making a long-term investment in summer learning when the pitch came from one of their peers, so whenever possible, they deputized those who were already committed to summer to make the case.

"We did awards for superintendents who stepped out early to be champions for [summer learning]," Peck says. "We called them Summer Matters superheroes and would give them capes at their big superintendent conferences to make them feel special."

superintendent. The students also visited legislators in their offices, interviewing them on video about their favorite summer memories. "We got really creative to try to build excitement and momentum," Peck says. The event was a magnet for media coverage and became an annual fixture of the campaign.

ADVANCING STATE POLICY AND ENLISTING LOCAL CHAMPIONS

At the same time as it was making the case for summer learning in public and the press, PCY was using its experience in the legislative arena to see that the issue took root in state policy. It started by drafting and winning passage of a resolution to establish a legislative task force on summer learning that would become a vehicle for subsequent proposals. The task force, which had the advantage of requiring no funding, lasted a year, at the end of which it issued a report with findings and recommendations to the governor, state superintendent, and every member of the legislature. From that point on, PCY tried to put forward a piece of legislation related to summer learning every year of the Summer Matters initiative. Several of these bills became law, including one that directed an increase in 21st CCLC funding to summer

By its close in 2016, the Summer Matters initiative had established a cadre of robust programs that served, in Sunshine's words, as "an innovation engine" for the entire state; instigated a series of policy changes that created more favorable conditions for the growth of summer programs; and brought newfound attention to summer as a time of great opportunity for schools, communities, and young people. PCY is still building on the groundwork laid in those years.

"One of the really important things we did during that campaign that I'd say we had moderate success with, but are having a huge amount of success with now, is shifting the language from summer school to summer learning," Peck says. "So much of what we did during that campaign set the stage for what we're seeing now."

PCY's trajectory has not been an uninterrupted upward arc, however. Challenging times lay ahead for both the organization and the field it represents, demanding that they find strength in numbers like never before.

WEATHERING A FINANCIAL CRISIS

Summer Matters was a success in many ways, but when it was over in 2016, PCY wasn't in a position to celebrate. The end of the initiative meant the end of its grant from the Packard Foundation. Recognizing that the transition could be rocky, Packard had increased its support for PCY in the final year. Nonetheless, the loss of a key source of funding contributed to what Peck calls "a financial crisis."

PCY "hadn't planned effectively to sustain some of our work," she says, observing that, in hindsight, the organization could have explored reducing overhead, downsizing staff, or diversifying revenue streams. "We had plenty of notice, but the aftermath was still excruciating. I spent a year trying to hold everything together, and we went through a real tough exercise to assess does it make sense for this organization to stick around? Because we were hanging on by a thread."

The network of expanded learning providers, funders and fellow nonprofits in California that Peck and PCY had been building and supporting for the past 10 years now became the support system they relied on.¹² Peck also leaned on her national colleagues in the Every Hour Counts network, who were important sources of advice and moral support. "I had to do a lot of asking for help," Peck says, "and I got a lot of help, some of it from corners I didn't even expect."

Peck reached out far and wide and didn't try to sugarcoat the predicament the organization was in. "It was a risk because people might have said, 'I'm not going to bet on that horse. They're going down.' But that honesty really paid off. Not everybody made a grant to us, but nobody totally walked away from us either." She was particularly moved that a couple of large program providers PCY had worked with in the past stepped up to offer their backing. "That blew me away. These executive directors were willing to go to their boards and give us a loan. That's how much they wanted us to survive."

As far as Peck is concerned, PCY got through the ordeal "in the nick of time." Within two years of righting the ship, COVID-19 hit, knocking the entire expanded learning field sideways. "It was so important that we were a solid, stable organization when that moment came," she says.

¹² Wallace was among the funders that supported PCY during this time, providing a \$150,000 grant for long-term planning.



**PCY received
much help—
some of it from
unexpected
places.**



Supporters rally for the Save Afterschool campaign in Los Angeles in 2019.

CAMPAIGNING TO 'SAVE' AFTERSCHOOL

Even before the pandemic forced programs to turn out the lights, expanded learning providers were facing a financial reckoning of their own. In 2016, the same year PCY's money struggles began, Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill that would raise California's minimum wage from \$10 an hour to a first-in-the-nation \$15 an hour over the course of six years. While a win for the labor force, the increase boded ill for afterschool and summer programs, which largely relied on minimum-wage staff.

It had been a decade since PCY and Tom Torlakson had successfully fought to raise the daily rate paid to state-funded programs at \$7.50 per child per day from the original \$5.00, and there hadn't been a cost-of-living increase since. PCY crunched the numbers. The outlook was grim—many programs faced the prospect of closing because they couldn't afford the minimum wage hike. "We realized, 'This needs to be a campaign,'" Peck says.

One advantage PCY had going into what became known as the Save Afterschool campaign was that the infrastructure for it was already in place. In 2002, in the wake of Prop. 49, PCY, along with leading providers and fellow statewide organizations with an interest in expanded learning, had banded together to organize the field and set forth a coherent agenda for publicly funded programs throughout the state. The group evolved into a formal, Packard-funded coalition in 2007 under the name the League of California Afterschool Providers and again in 2010, after momentum had stalled, into the California Afterschool Advocacy Alliance (CA3). Initially, the group had hired a lobbyist to represent its interests in Sacramento, but eventually PCY took over that responsibility, with the other members paying for staffing.

Ana Campos was president and CEO of Afterschool All-Stars, Los Angeles, a chapter of the nonprofit program provider founded by Arnold Schwarzenegger and an original member of CA3,

from 2005 to 2021. She explains the decision to make PCY the group's political liaison: "They understood what we were trying to do programmatically, and they really understood our challenges [as providers]. And because they concentrated on youth-centered programs, we had 100 percent of their attention, which you don't necessarily get when you're working with an external lobbyist."

CA3 became the engine of the Save Afterschool campaign. PCY recruited providers that were well-connected with their elected representatives and local officials to join the coalition, and together they put together a list of funders, community-based organizations, parents, and other stakeholders that they could mobilize at strategic points in the legislature's budget process.

Foundations don't typically award grants for budget advocacy campaigns, and PCY was on shaky ground financially at the time. The fees it was getting from the other members of CA3 only went so far. "We actually went in the hole on this work for a couple years, which was tough for us," Peck recalls. "I don't know that my board was very happy with me on that, but I just felt this is kind of a do or die moment, we've got to do everything we can." PCY was able to devote one full-time staff person, part of Peck's time, and the occasional media consultant to the effort. The organization leaned heavily on its CA3 partners.

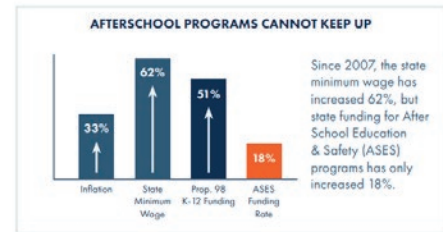
"We had great statewide partners," Peck says, "other children's advocacy organizations that did shared messaging with key members of the legislature. And then it was our providers on the ground that invited members to come see their program, showed up to the hearings, got their families to write the letters and do the texts [to legislators]. They did a big, big, big lift."

PCY took the lead in developing the messages that the other members of the coalition delivered to policymakers. "How do we ensure we're all speaking in one voice? The role PCY played was to help structure that so people were not all over the frickin' map," Campos says.

It wasn't easy. PCY didn't have a great deal of experience with state budget negotiations, and raising the daily rate for expanded learning providers was, in Peck's words, "a very difficult political sell because we were trying to get more money in the state budget not to serve any additional kids but to serve exactly the same number of kids."

To get the point across, PCY took a page out of its Summer Matters playbook and made a fear-based appeal. "We had graphs showing what would happen year after year and then these big cliffs at the moment [providers] were actually no longer going to be able to pay staff and tens of thousands of kids were going to lose access. That was alarming to members that had these programs in their communities," Peck says.

The members of the legislature weren't the only ones the Save Afterschool coalition had to convince. Unlike Gov. Schwarzenegger, Gov. Brown wasn't known to consider expanded learning a top priority. "We had to try to use our relationships to figure out who the governor was listening



Materials from the California Afterschool Advocacy Alliance to support an increase in out-of-school-time funding, released in 2020.

“
**Save Afterschool
 was a ‘do-or-die’
 moment,
 Peck felt.**”



Live Media

Assembly Room 4202 Video , Tuesday, June 16th, 2020



Jennifer Peck testifies at a hearing about the reopening of schools during the pandemic.

PCY and the other members of CA3 had intended to continue the Save Afterschool campaign in pursuit not of more one-time funding increases but its original goal: a policy that would tie the daily per-child rate to rising costs. The hardship and uncertainty caused by the pandemic forced them to abruptly push that agenda to the backburner. Nonetheless, Peck believes the work that went into the campaign—“the steady year after year of being in front of decisionmakers about the importance of afterschool”—put them in a position to be the strong advocates the field desperately needed in its time of crisis.

DOCUMENTING AFTERSCHOOL’S CONTRIBUTIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Like the expanded learning programs that had to adjust on the fly to changing conditions—for instance by becoming home delivery services for meals and laptops when they weren’t allowed on the school campuses where they typically operated—PCY had to adopt new tactics to keep providers on the frontlines firmly in the minds of the people in high places as the pandemic raged. In the new reality of working from home and meeting online, Peck and her team couldn’t rely on their tried-and-true method of walking the halls of the Capitol and knocking on legislators’ doors. Face time had been replaced by FaceTime. This sometimes worked to their advantage. Busy elected officials who might typically send their staff to represent them at in-person meetings were more likely to find the time to squeeze in a 30-minute Zoom call. PCY and its partners had done outreach on social media as part of the Save Afterschool campaign, but now it became a more important part of their toolkit, with CA3 drafting sample tweets for providers to send to their representatives.

The fundamentals of PCY’s approach remained largely unchanged, however. The organization once again found itself in the role of storyteller, quickly raising money to document the many contributions, sacrifices, and even innovations providers were making during the pandemic as they stepped in to provide food and other basic necessities, safe learning environments, and emotional support in ways that schools couldn’t. It became a clearinghouse of research, first-hand accounts, and news coverage about learning hubs, where small groups of students could attend school online with in-person supervision and support from caring adults. In early 2021, PCY released a report in collaboration with fellow nonprofit The Opportunity Institute making the case that community-based expanded learning providers were essential to the all-hands-on-deck task of reopening schools.

to on this,” Peck says. “[There was] a district attorney in Alameda County who’s great on afterschool programs. We found out through a friend of a friend of a friend she was old buddies with Governor Brown and actually had his cell phone number. I didn’t know this woman, but I found someone who knows her, and she agreed to make a call.”

The campaign lasted four years and was, by Peck’s standards, a partial success. “Only two out of the four years did we actually get [budget] increases,” she notes. Those increases—\$50 million each, for a total of \$100 million—were “enough to sort of keep people steady and keep the doors open.”

That is until the onset of the pandemic changed everything.

PAVING THE WAY FOR BILLIONS IN FUNDING...AND THE WORK AHEAD

While Peck is quick to point out that PCY did not instigate the discussions that led the state to include \$4.6 billion in one-time funding for expanded learning in its recovery plans in 2021, and then an additional \$3.4 billion in ongoing funding in 2022, she believes that the work of the organization and its partners during the pandemic, the Save Afterschool campaign, and all its past efforts helped lay the groundwork for that game-changing investment. “We really tried to keep raising the flag for our sector, that they were a lifeline for kids and families,” she says.

Peck’s collaborators and supporters over the years, including Loni Hancock, the former state legislator, agree. “I think [PCY] has had a very important role,” she says. “They’ve been the boots on the ground, making sure that legislators, governors, and superintendents of education know what out-of-school time means to kids and know what has to happen to make it work well.”

Ana Campos, the former head of Afterschool All-Stars, L.A. and Peck’s CA3 colleague, makes it clear the journey isn’t over. “Yes, there has been tremendous progress made in terms of the amount of funding coming for expanded learning, but when you look at the need in communities, there’s still a huge gap.” She and others mention building a sustainable afterschool and summer workforce as a pressing challenge for the field. Amanda Reedy of the Gilroy Unified School District wants to see more support for innovative programming that addresses young people’s social and emotional needs and trauma. Danica Petroschius of the Penn Hill Group notes that the new windfall for expanded learning in California will go directly to school districts, meaning more advocacy is needed to ensure community-based organizations are included as valued partners and compensated accordingly.

Peck shares all those goals while at the same time remaining focused, as always, on the nitty-gritty of turning policy into reality, in this case seeing that the new multi-billion-dollar investment that PCY helped make possible “gets to the kids who need it most” and results in programs that are high quality and can be sustained over the long haul. She points out the irony that the new pot of money, which is supposed to pay for afterschool for every student in the state up to 6th grade, provides even less per student per day than earlier state funding sources. She’s also concerned that the state’s education system is not ready to meet the demands of getting so many new programs, particularly summer programs, up and running. Districts and charter schools receiving the new funding will be required to offer at least 30 days of “intersession” programming (meaning programming that takes place during winter, spring, and/or summer breaks).¹³ [For more, see sidebar on this page “A New Funding Reality Means a Full Agenda for PCY.”]

¹³ “The 2022-23 Budget: Expanded Learning Programs,” Legislative Analyst’s Office, California Legislature, 2022. <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4545>

A New Funding Reality Means a Full Agenda for PCY

Recognizing PCY’s deep expertise in summer learning, the state and private funders have tasked the organization with disseminating information, tools, and other resources for creating high-quality summer programs as billions of dollars for expanded learning start pouring into the system. Peck says, “We’ve had to devote a lot of organizational energy... to try to avoid the disaster of districts getting a bunch of this new money and just creating remedial summer school. We live in fear of that.”

PCY is also involved in discussions with the California Department of Education, along with state associations representing superintendents and principals, about better coordinating technical assistance for expanded learning with the state’s other education priorities, including early (i.e., pre-kindergarten) learning and community schools (schools that serve as a hub of social services for the surrounding neighborhood), both of which are set to receive their own major boost in funding. And it is pushing a new piece of legislation that would redirect much of the money California gets from the federal 21st CCLC program to middle and high schools, which won’t benefit from the new state funding.

Similarly, PCY has participated in a series of meetings about reducing chronic absenteeism with staffers from state agencies, legislators, and school districts. In Peck’s words, “They’re [asking], ‘What are some strategies we should be thinking about [to address the problem]?’ And I’m saying, ‘Hello, we’re investing billions of dollars in afterschool programs! We have decades worth of research showing that quality afterschool programs increase school-day attendance.’”¹

Then there’s the ongoing work of telling the story of expanded learning and the difference it makes for California’s young people “because,” Peck says, “down the road, whether it’s a change in governors or an economic downturn, this investment will be on the chopping block, and we need to be prepared for that.”

¹ Huang, D., Gribbons, B., Kim, K. S., Lee, C., & Baker, E. L. A decade of results: The impact of the LA’s BEST after school enrichment initiative on subsequent student achievement and performance. UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, 2000.



New co-CEOs of the Partnership for Children & Youth, Aleah Rosario (left) and Jessica Gunderson

INTRODUCING NEW LEADERSHIP

As much as PCY has accomplished, Peck sees even more that remains to be done—for starters, working with the state to figure out what she calls the “puzzle” of achieving universal afterschool for elementary-age students while at the same time maintaining standards of high quality for programs. “I don’t think there’s any worry about us staying relevant,” she says.

The difference this time is that PCY will have to do it without Peck.

Peck is leaving both the organization she co-founded and the state where her influence is so widely felt. A confluence of factors led to the decision: her husband, a school superintendent, getting an enticing job offer on the East Coast; her daughter graduating from high school; a desire to replenish her energy after so many years of pushing full steam ahead and to give the organization the benefit of an infusion of fresh ideas.

PCY has named two successors to fill Peck’s shoes. Aleah Rosario and Jessica Gunderson both have a history with the organization—Rosario as director of programs, Gunderson as senior director of policy and research and subsequently as a consultant—as well as a wellspring of experience with politics, grassroots advocacy, workforce development, and research in the realm of expanded learning. Like Peck, both were shaped by early afterschool experiences: dance and girls leadership development for Rosario; basketball, soccer, and peer counseling for Gunderson.

As co-CEOs, they will be responsible for executing PCY's strategy for the next four years, which involves not only working with the state and local communities on the rollout of newly funded programs but also expanding and diversifying the membership of the CA3 coalition, establishing the true costs of running a high-quality program, better organizing the field to meet programs' staffing needs, prioritizing opportunities for middle and high school youth and multi-lingual learners, and continuing to raise awareness about innovations in summer learning.

Gunderson says that PCY is entering this new phase in a strong position "because of the staff who came before us and the staff who are here today." Rosario calls them a "small but mighty team," a team that Peck made a point of empowering over the years. "Because of how much she believes in people and how much autonomy she gives them...it allows them to do more than they otherwise thought they could have," Gunderson says.

To the obvious question—what will she do next?—Peck has a quick and simple answer: She doesn't know yet. She wants to take time to reflect on "the great stuff and the really hard stuff" that she, PCY, and their many partners have gone through over the past 25 years.

LEARNING FROM THE JOURNEY

In the announcement of her departure, Peck called her time with PCY a "learning journey." Sometimes that meant learning the hard way. "I think you'll hear a similar story from people who start organizations," she says. "You have no idea what the hell you're getting yourself into. I got inspired by something, and I saw a gap. I was somewhat of a risktaker, I guess. I dove in not having any idea what it took to run an organization."

While Peck and PCY's journey may be similar to that of other nonprofit leaders and organizations in certain respects, in others it is unique. When Peck started on her path, she brought invaluable experience, contacts, and credibility with her from her time in the Clinton administration. At the same time PCY was establishing itself as trusted voice for the expanded learning field, a charismatic new political leader was rallying support for a major commitment to afterschool programs. And all of PCY's efforts have taken place in the state with the world's fifth largest economy and an increasingly progressive electorate and government. All of these factors and more have made PCY's many wins—the funding it has helped secure, the legislation and policies it has had a hand in crafting, the fledgling programs it has supported, the coalitions it has built with its partners, the successful campaigns it has led—possible.

Nonetheless, Peck believes she has learned lessons along the way that could help expanded learning intermediary organizations across the country rack up wins of their own. Here are a few:

Every relationship matters.

Aleah Rosario, one of Peck's successors at PCY, says it's no coincidence that the organization's name starts with the word "partnership." Every time PCY has been able to move the needle on expanded learning policy and practice, the work has started with forging a strong alliance, whether with then-assemblyman Tom Torlakson to draft and secure passage of the implementation legislation for Prop. 49, with the Packard Foundation and the local school districts and providers that participated in the Summer Matters initiative, or with the members of the CA3 coalition to lead the Save Afterschool campaign.

Michael Funk, the expanded learning director at California's Department of Education, has spoken to state leaders in New York and Michigan looking to take a page from California's book. His advice: "You have to find someone somewhere you can build a relationship with. My belief is, you start where you can. And if that's not at the state government, then it's the state legislature



New co-CEOs are taking the helm.

or the county board of supervisors. Then people move through life and, all of a sudden, they're in a different position of influence and you can do something. That's the long arc."

This has been Peck's modus operandi. She has built bridges to every sector that has a bearing on PCY's work, from state and local government and philanthropy to school districts and community organizations. "There's not a table that has anything to do with afterschool that she or somebody from [PCY] would not be at," says Danica Petroschius. This ethos has served PCY well, especially in trying times. After all, it wasn't just foundations that threw the organization a lifeline when it was at risk of going under but providers that knew and valued PCY, as well.

For intermediaries and program providers, support is a two-way street.

That program providers with their own bills to pay would extend a loan to PCY in difficult times is a sign of how indispensable the services of a high-functioning intermediary can be to its partners focused on the day-to-day challenges of caring for young people.



'Find someone somewhere you can build a relationship with,' Funk says.

PCY was born out of the recognition that there is a problem with government funding for expanded learning: Communities that qualify for assistance—and stand to benefit greatly from it—don't have the time, resources, or expertise to apply on their own. PCY's first project involved helping them overcome those hurdles, but that was just the beginning of the organization's value proposition. Its staff members and technical assistance partners have stood side by side with program leaders, like Amanda Reedy of the Gilroy Unified School District, as they've built their programs from the ground up.

An intermediary's work doesn't end when programs are off the ground and running smoothly. Ana Campos says that not all providers have the time, know-how, or connections to go to bat on their own for policies that will enable them to survive and thrive. "You give us a group of kids and the money and we can run with that," she says. "Some of us have learned the art of advocacy, but it's not our primary function...[PCY] is with us every step of the way."

Campos emphasizes, however, that, in the story of expanded learning in California, it has taken the combined action of PCY, program providers and others to effect meaningful change. She credits PCY with bringing structure, strategy, and political smarts to CA3. Programs, meanwhile, have brought people power: students, families, local funders and officials, anyone and everyone with a stake in afterschool and summer learning. Among them were the providers' own staff members, who took time away from their everyday responsibilities to lend communications and other support, such as data showing the positive effects their programs have on young people, to the Save Afterschool campaign. "I haven't seen any legislative bills specifically related to expanded learning and youth programs come from anything that any one organization has done," Campos says.

Peck concurs. "We really relied on our providers," she says. "No way we could have done any of this without them."

An effective intermediary sees the forest and the trees.

"Policy or funding happens," Petroschius says, "when preparation meets opportunity. PCY didn't open its doors and then 20 years later decide, 'Oh, we have to think about policy and advocacy...' It's a long game. You're not going to make significant progress every day. There are going to be big jumps, but those jumps only happen when you're ready for the opportunity...Jennifer is a master at that...She can see the forest for the trees."

Peck agrees that big-picture thinking is essential to an organization intent on changing the way an entire system operates. At the same time, she believes intermediaries need to be able

to swiftly shift gears in response to changing conditions—just as PCY did when the pandemic struck, putting the Save Afterschool campaign on hold so it could chronicle the contributions of expanded learning providers.

She calls this balancing act a central “tension” for any intermediary and notes that PCY engages in “strategic direction” setting rather than “strategic planning,” the organization’s way of acknowledging that the best-laid plans are only provisional, and it must “be nimble enough” to continually adjust its approach in pursuit of its long-term goals.

In practice, this can be painful. The state of play for expanded learning in California is evolving, and PCY is evolving with it, which could mean leaving behind a number of worthy endeavors, including projects devoted to nutrition, community schools, and bringing programs to public and affordable housing. (Rosario says PCY may seek out partner organizations that can serve as new homes for some of the resources it has developed as part of these projects.) It’s making these hard choices so PCY can sharpen its focus on its core mission: ensuring afterschool and summer learning providers are properly funded and delivering high-quality experiences to the young people who stand to benefit most.

Strategic communication is one of the main ingredients of a successful advocacy campaign.

Peck says that strategic communication wasn’t much of a consideration in the early years of the Bay Area Partnership and PCY, when she was more concerned with cultivating one-on-one relationships than targeting broader audiences. All that changed with the Summer Matters initiative, which counted raising awareness about the value of summer learning as a primary goal. From then on, PCY added an array of new communication skills to its quiver, such as crafting messages that appeal to the news media (the danger of the “summer slide”), hosting attention-grabbing public events (with young people front and center), using data to drive home a crucial point (graphs showing the fiscal cliff facing underpaid program providers), and putting key decisionmakers in the spotlight in order to garner and keep their support (Summer Matters superheroes).

Peck observes that school board members, legislators, superintendents, and other officials who answer to voters (or, in the case of superintendents, to their local school board) thrive on publicity. Starting with Summer Matters, PCY has turned that instinct into win-win propositions. “We would go to school board member X or legislator Y and say, ‘We really want to get an opinion piece placed in this publication. If we draft it, would you put your name on it?’ I’ve never had somebody say ‘no’ to that...Then you get them on record saying good things about [the policy] you’re trying to move.” And when a sought-after policy change does come to fruition? Sharing credit far and wide is the first step in lining up support for the next campaign.

Politics is not for the faint of heart.

You might think Peck could navigate the inner workings of the political process without breaking a sweat at this point, considering how many laws and policies have PCY’s stamp on them. But Peck makes a distinction between “fun” politics, like volunteering on her friend Tom Torlakson’s campaigns, and the kind of politics that PCY must engage in to achieve its aims, which she says can be “ruthless” and “disheartening.” It takes a thick skin and a steel backbone to persist in the face of entrenched opposition from those who control the purse strings—think of Peck overcoming her fear to face Gov. Schwarzenegger’s staff and argue against using test scores as an accountability metric for afterschool providers.

Sometimes, though, being tough and sticking to your guns is not enough. Peck recalls an effort to get afterschool workers access to a teacher training program that was designed for school-



Share credit for success; this can bring support for the next effort.



William McCoy, then-superintendent of Sausalito Marin City School District, receives a Summer Matters Superhero Award from Jennifer Peck during the California School Board Association's annual education conference in 2016. Also pictured: Tom Torlakson, California's then-superintendent of public instruction, and Richard Martinez, then-superintendent of the Pomona Unified School District.

day paraprofessionals and instructional aids. “We were feeling confident about our ability to move that policy forward because it made lots of sense and we had relationships in the legislature,” she says. “We tried, three different times over the subsequent five-year period or so to pass that bill, and we were never successful. We were naïve about what it would take.”

In Peck's account, PCY hit a brick wall because the union representing paraprofessionals in the state resisted the change. “We just didn't understand what a big hurdle that was,” she says. “That was a real eye-opener for us...We've been around a long time, but we're not a powerful campaign-donating entity. Our folks aren't unionized. We don't have a lobbyist. [California is] a big state, money and unions are huge factors. There are certain things we're not going to win.”

That's not to say PCY completely gave up on the issue. The organization has written briefs to educate lawmakers about the unique assets afterschool workers bring to the teaching profession. And since Tony Thurmond, the current state superintendent, made recruiting more teachers of color a priority,¹⁴ PCY has been ready and able to make the case that the expanded learning field can help the state achieve that objective.

The lesson for intermediaries? Toughness is good, but perseverance is even better.

¹⁴ Lambert, Diana, “Push to increase the number of teachers of color in California classrooms gains momentum,” Edsource, 2019. <https://edsources.org/2019/effort-to-increase-the-number-of-teachers-of-color-in-california-classrooms-gains-momentum/618412>

A PCY TIMELINE

1993	Jennifer Peck joins U.S. Dept. of Education as Clinton administration political appointee
1994	21st Century Community Learning Centers program established by Congress
1997	Bay Area Partnership launched
1999	Partnership begins providing grant-writing assistance to programs
2002	California voters pass Prop. 49, paving way for new era in state before- and afterschool funding
2006	Gov. Schwarzenegger signs Prop. 49 implementation measure, Sen. Bill 638, which Partnership helps shape
2006-2007	Prop. 49 funding of expanded learning begins
2007	Partnership decides summer learning—for which Prop. 49 funding is unavailable—is next frontier
2009	Summer Matters campaign gets underway; funded by Packard, Partnership works with 12 communities to establish strong summer learning programs
2009	Organization renamed Partnership for Children & Youth, recognizing its statewide reach
2009	200 middle-schoolers take part in first annual Summer Matters rally at State Capitol
2010	Peck takes part-time leave from PCY to join transition team for incoming California superintendent of public instruction
2010	California Afterschool Advocacy Alliance (CA3) forms
2011	Afterschool division created in California Department of Education
2012	Over a decade, PCY's grant-writing project results in more than \$90-million in public funding for programs
2016	Gov. Jerry Brown signs bill raising state minimum wage to \$15-hourly; CA3's four-year Save Afterschool campaign pushes for state funding enabling programs to keep up with wage hike; Partnership helps steer effort to what Peck calls partial success in increased funding
2016	Partnership enters two-year period of financial difficulty, following end of Summer Matters grant; funders and partners, including program providers, step up to help
2020	COVID-19 pandemic erupts with massive impact on families, schools and programs
2021	Partnership releases report with nonprofit Opportunity Institute on essential role of expanded learning providers in school reopening
2021	\$4.6 billion in one-time relief funding for expanded learning approved by legislature, with additional billions for future years
2022	Peck announces she is stepping down; new co-CEOs Aleah Rosario and Jessica Gunderson prepare to lead Partnership's "small but mighty team"



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