

For Immediate Release

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New Executive Director to Lead ExpandLA -- Initiative Aimed at Increasing Access to Expanded Learning Programming for Youth throughout Los Angeles

Organization will immediately launch dialogue with expanded learning providers, parents and Los Angeles leaders to determine how best to support children and youth as they work back from the significant trauma caused by Covid-19 pandemic

LOS ANGELES — M. Lou Calanche, the founder of Legacy LA who has spent decades successfully advocating for the children of Los Angeles, has been named the Executive Director of the Expanded Learning Alliance (“ExpandLA”), the group’s Board of Directors announced today.

ExpandLA is an organization that represents out-of-school program providers. The organization’s mission aims to address the barriers and challenges in access to out-of-school programs for children, particularly those from historically marginalized communities.

The hiring of Ms. Calanche comes at a critical time as the organization doubles down on advocating for and helping to coordinate vibrant expanded learning opportunities for children and youth amid the significant challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. The organization was formed based on recommendations from the expanded learning field of a need for a regional intermediary and is currently incubated inside the Mayor’s Fund for Los Angeles. ExpandLA will support, connect and advocate for expanded learning opportunities that provide equitable access for all children and youth in Los Angeles. Its long-term goals are to increase and sustain investment in the expanded learning field, have more children and youth engaged in meaningful expanded learning pathways and programs, and develop communities of practice to improve programs and services for youth.

“Offering children access to expanded learning activities is critical at all times; never more so as after two years of Los Angeles’ youth suffering the ramifications of a global pandemic,” said M. Lou Calanche, incoming Executive Director for ExpandLA. High quality expanded learning opportunities have been linked to improved academic and social outcomes for youth and are an essential part of the recovery. “I have always been a believer in going directly to the community

to hear what is wanted and needed and am therefore excited to spend my first few months in this new

role speaking to providers, parents, youth and other leaders around Los Angeles to determine how ExpandLA and the broader expanded learning community can best support our kids.”

This research will come in the form of a number of listening sessions and surveys with providers, advocates and parents around the city.

The naming of Ms. Calanche comes as Superintendent Alberto Carvalho begins his tenure at LA Unified, where many young people for whom ExpandLA advocates attend schools. ExpandLA will work closely and align with the new superintendent’s vision to ensure all youth have access to a bright future, especially youth in communities that do not have even minimal access to expanded learning resources. ExpandLA’s efforts to bridge the gap between those of high and low wealth comes as research has shown that academic performance correlates with access to out-of-school programming. At the same time, family income, in many cases, determines access to out-of-school programming, according to the nonprofit Every Hour Counts, a national network of city-based expanded learning intermediaries.

"Expanded learning providers in L.A. are doing amazing things for youth, and many have met informally for years to better organize and provide a voice for our sector. I am excited for ExpandLA to further break down silos so we can be more effective providers for youth and especially include voices of those who have been historically marginalized,” said Tony Brown, CEO of Heart of Los Angeles and ExpandLA board member. “There are so many vulnerable youth who do not yet have access to quality expanded learning programs. We look forward to working with city and district leaders to prioritize youth of lower socioeconomic status and make more opportunities accessible to them.”

"Learning has to continue outside of the school day, with music lessons, sports, academic support, visits to museums, and other activities. Unfortunately, students from historically marginalized communities, who typically have the greatest need for additional enrichment, are least likely to get it” according to research from Every Hour Counts. “Expanded-learning fills critical gaps in students’ education and life experiences. Expanded learning teaches students about academics, collaboration, and problem solving. Young people not only learn how to do better in school, they find new ways to ignite their passions — and to engage in learning and life.” That is where

ExpandLA will be a game-changer, joining many other city-based expanded learning intermediaries around the country that strive to ensure all youth have access to quality out-of-school programming and ensuring that programming is considered just as important as time during the school day.

“By taking a community, parent- and youth-centered approach to the expansion of out-of-school activities, ExpandLA will be able to truly bring attention to -- and hopefully galvanize citywide support for -- this critical part of every child’s development,” said Gerun Riley, President of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and a seed funder of the initiative. “For decades, Lou has successfully advocated for LA’s youth, and we are fully confident she will continue to deliver for young people in this new role.”

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About ExpandLA:

ExpandLA supports, connects, and advocates for expanded learning opportunities that provide equitable access for all children and youth in the Los Angeles area. After decades of systemic racism, marginalization, and income inequality-limiting opportunities for L.A. area children and youth, ExpandLA envisions an expanded learning environment accessible to all, which nurtures children’s thirst for knowledge and creative pursuit and celebrates their cultures and identities.

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