

Digital Badges in Expanded Learning

Developed by the Committee on Digital Badges in Expanded Learning Programs

If the expanded learning movement is to continue to prosper, these programs must be recognized as important places of learning. The use and awarding of digital badges to recognize the learning that takes place within these programs represents an excellent strategy to accomplish this. Digital badges can be used to recognize exemplar programs, staff trainers, program staff, and volunteers who have completed professional development and youth who have acquired new knowledge and skills through participation in expanded learning activities.

What is a Digital Badge?

“Digital badges are an assessment and credentialing mechanism that is housed and managed online. Badges are designed to make visible and validate learning in both formal and informal settings, and hold the potential to help transform where and how learning is valued.”¹

What are the Benefits of Digital Badges?

The Center for Digital Badges (CDB) and our partners believe that by using digital badges to acknowledge the learning of staff and youth participants, these programs will benefit in the following ways:

- Because program leaders must think through and explicitly state what learning will take place in program activities or clubs that are to be recognized by a digital badge; this specificity raises the bar for learning accountability.
- The awarding of digital badges defines the learning that goes on within a program for outsiders, which is vital if expanded learning programs are to be recognized as important places of learning. Badges can become important, visible evidence that expanded learning programs take learning seriously and apply rigorous standards to learning outcomes.
- The adult program staff members often acquire important knowledge and skills through professional development and years of experience. Youth acquire valuable skills and knowledge through their participation in specific expanded learning activities. Both deserve an artifact that documents their learning and—importantly—can be shared with peers, future employers, and those allowing admittance to higher education.

¹ Digital Badges; MacArthur Foundation; [www.macfound.org/programs/digital-badges/]; April 2015



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What Expanded Learning Programs Are Using Digital Badges?

California School-Age Consortium

www.calsac.org/projects/digital_badges

CalSAC awards digital badges to their trainers and the afterschool staff that participate in their professional development training and programs.

"Given the breadth, scale and depth of training and leadership development opportunities that staff and programs access from CalSAC any given year, it seemed clear that there should be a way for them to capture the investment they're making toward providing quality services for children and youth." – Ruth Obel- Jorgensen, Executive Director, CalSAC

Central Valley Digital Badge Project www.bit.ly/centralValleyELPs

This group used digital badges to recognize high school afterschool programs that are exemplar in demonstrating the Learning in Afterschool & Summer (LIAS) learning principles.

"Based on anecdotal evidence, the digital badge program assessments assisted program leaders and youth identify strengths and weaknesses in activity content and delivery." – Lori Carr, Fresno County Office of Education

Youth Institute (YMCA of Greater Long Beach) and Replication Sites www.lbymcayl.org

The use of digital badges by the Youth Institute acknowledges the learning of their program alumni and newer youth participants who complete program courses, projects and experiences.

"We saw digital badges as a perfect opportunity for our youth to be recognized for their knowledge and expertise in digital media and to provide mastery of skills in a workforce setting. Every activity in the summer and year-round is product-based; the youth need to show expertise of a subject matter by completing the project. Our program and curriculum model blend perfectly with the badge system." – Les Peters, Executive Director, Youth Institute

For More Information

The Center for Digital Badges serves as a clearinghouse for information and research on digital badges. It also offers a number of case studies on the use of digital badges by expanded learning programs. It was created by Temescal Associates and offers implementation support for expanded learning programs. www.temescalassoc.com/db/

The Badge Alliance is a network of organizations and individuals working together to build and support an open badging ecosystem, with a focus on shared values including openness, learner agency and innovation. www.badgealliance.org

Open Badges is a new online standard to recognize and verify learning and lets you take your badges everywhere. It offers users an easy and comprehensive way to collect their badges in a single backpack, and display their skills and achievements on social networking profiles, job sites, their websites and more. www.openbadges.org

Members of the Committee for Digital Badges in Expanded Learning Programs include the After School Division at the CDE, Badge Alliance, CalSAC, Central Valley Afterschool Foundation, Youth Institute (YMCA of Greater Long Beach), Fresno County Office of Education, Los Angeles Unified School District, and Temescal Associates.

