



**think**  
TOGETHER

Expanded Learning Time Program

**PARENT - STUDENT  
HANDBOOK  
2024 - 2025**



# Expanded Learning Time Program Parent - Student Handbook

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## Expanded Learning Time Program Information

### MISSION

Think Together partners with schools to change the odds for kids.

### ETHICS

Think Together is committed to adhering to high standards of ethical conduct in all of our operations. This includes a commitment to provide accurate and complete information, to exercise care and act in good faith, to comply with all laws, regulations and organizational policies, and to promote ethical behavior. Think Together's integrity and reputation of the organization ultimately depends upon the individual actions of each Employee. Therefore, all employees are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical and lawful manner.

Think Together has retained Ethical Advocate to manage Think Together's ethics reporting. This reporting mechanism is designed to encourage Employees, as well as stakeholders -- including, volunteers, students, parents/guardians and school/district/charter administration -- to inform Think Together of alleged misconduct, to ensure that all allegations are thoroughly investigated, and suitable action(s) are taken where necessary. Corrective action, up to and including termination, will be taken where warranted for employees. And, appropriate action will also be taken in response to any violation of policy by any non-employee.

Think Together employees, volunteers, students, parents/guardians, school/district/charter administration, and other stakeholders are encouraged to report any practices or actions believed to be inappropriate to the Think Together toll-free ethics hotline at 866-993-5153 or <https://thinktogether.ethicaladvocate.com/>. Calls to the toll-free hotline or contact through the Internet site are facilitated by Ethical Advocate. Reporting of ethics violations will be treated as confidential information and can be communicated anonymously

### STAFF CONTACT WITH STUDENTS OUTSIDE OF PROGRAM

For the protection of our students as well as our employees, Think Together does not tolerate, promote, or in any manner allow socializing or association with program participants outside of Think Together normal operating hours or activities. Additionally, Think Together employees are not allowed to walk students home or provide them with transportation from programs or to and from any other event. Students should never share personal phone numbers, email addresses, or online contact information with employees. Contact with students in our program beyond program hours is prohibited.

## Program Operation

### HOURS OF OPERATION

The law requires that all TK-8th grade expanded learning programs operate when school is in session and that it begins when the school day ends. Hours of operations will vary depending on the out of school time funding requirements. Hours of operations will vary depending on the out-of-school time funding requirements. [Section 8483(a)(1) of the California Education Code]. Additional programming may be offered. Check with your site's Site Program Manager for more information. It is the intent of the Legislature that students participate in the full day of the program every day during which pupils participate, in order to accomplish program goals [Section 8483(a)(2) of the California Education Code]. High school programs have the option of operating after school only or after and during any combination of before school, weekends, summer, intersession, and vacation (EC Section 8422[d]). The ASSETs program must operate a minimum of 15 hours per week (EC Section 8421[c]) and

does not require student participants to participate in the full day of program every day.

## STAFFING

- A Site Program Manager (SPM) ensures that high quality expanded learning time is provided to each student enrolled in the program. SPMs are required to go through a series of trainings given by Think Together. Using standard Think Together program materials, SPMs coordinate and support the activities Program Leaders do with the students; work with teachers, principals and other instructional-day staff to align expanded learning time activities with the students' instructional day programs; supervise and coach staff and do some site-based training; work with parents/guardians; and gather data to assure student safety, participation in enrichment activities and improved academic performance.
- Program Leaders (PLs) in K-8 Think Together programs are part-time paraprofessionals who must meet the district/charter requirements for employment under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) guidelines. Program Leaders work directly with students under the direction of the SPM and go through a series of trainings given by Think Together. A Program Leader supervises and manages a single group up to 20 students and provides homework assistance, academic enrichment and physical activity, using curriculum and materials provided by the program.
- Older Youth Leaders (OYLs) provide direct services to students in the high school expanded learning program. These are multi-purpose employees. They can lead classes/clubs or work in a drop-in tutorial. They are also available to chaperone field trips and special events. Older Youth Leaders are also responsible for the safety of all students. They are responsible for writing and delivering lessons and activities that support student learning and engagement. Lesson planning time must be scheduled and compensated. All OYLs must have a minimum of 40 college units to apply for the position.

## A TYPICAL PROGRAM SCHEDULE

- School dismisses and students report directly to the program as part of the school's dismissal process.
- Students are checked in, and, in groups led by their Program Leaders, have snack, restroom break, and opening activities. For safety reasons, students are taken on scheduled restroom breaks. Emergency needs will be handled by the Site Program Manager. This is specific to K-8 programs.
- Students cycle through the different program components, including homework assistance, academic enrichment activities, and physical activity.
- In high school programs, students are checked in, have snack, are led in activities by program staff. Students may opt to attend multiple program offerings in one day. For safety reasons, they check themselves in and out of all Think Together programs.
- TK-6th grade students are signed out by an authorized adult at the end of the day. If approved by their district/charter, Middle School students may walk home with by completing Request for Permission for Students to Walk Home Alone or Ride District/Charter-Approved Bus Home Alone Form.

**Note:** *The specific schedule for some groups or schools may vary from the one described here but all programs include all of these components. High school programs are considered drop-in programs therefore students sign themselves in and out at as needed. Students may attend program at any point during the times it is offered to meet their out of school time needs.*

## MEDICAL INFORMATION

In order to support the well-being of each student enrolled in the Think Together program it is important that parents/guardians make program staff aware of any medical conditions, allergies, and/or special needs that

may affect their student during program hours. Medical information previously shared with school-day faculty and staff may not have been made available to Think Together program staff, so it imperative that all necessary information be shared directly with program staff.

In the event a student suffers an illness or accident during program hours, Think Together staff may seek medical help and assistance by contacting 911 emergency services or otherwise securing treatment at a medical facility. Think Together does not provide medical treatment. Think Together staff do not administer medication, nor are Think Together staff trained medical personnel. Think Together does not provide or maintain medical insurance or coverage for participants.

Any student who is required to take medication prescribed by a physician, including self-administered auto-injectable epinephrine, may self-administer such medicine at the Think Together program provided that the student provides to Think Together a completed Self-Administration of Medicine Permission and Release Form. This form must be signed and dated by the parent/guardian and by the physician of the student, must identify the required medication and the dosage to be self-administered (including the method, amount, and time schedules of the administration of the medicine), and must confirm the student's ability to self-administer the medication. In completing this form, the parent/guardian will confirm their understanding that Think Together provides no medical staff, will not assist in the administration of the medication, and will not be held liable such as if the student suffers an adverse reaction as a result of self-administering the medication.

## **Program Components**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Think Together provides students with rich learning experiences delivered in a safe and supportive learning environment. Programs include time dedicated to nutrition, academic achievement, enrichment, and physical activity. Programs also include student social-emotional learning experiences that allow students to develop skills for success.

### **NUTRITIOUS SNACK AND/OR SUPPER**

In line with nutrition guidelines and procedures determined by district partners, Think Together provides students with snack and meals based on the time of programming. During this time students have opportunities to connect with peers and program staff.

- Food will only be eaten during snack and/or meal time or if used in an enrichment or learning session, or special events. Medically necessary adjustments to this policy can be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Students may not leave campus to get food before or during the program.
- Parents/guardians must list all food allergies on the Program Enrollment Application.

### **HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE**

Homework assistance is provided to students to give them an opportunity to begin their homework and get assistance and support from the program staff and volunteers in areas where they need it. With this support, our hope is for students to be more prepared to finish the remainder of their homework at home, if necessary.

The law requires that the program include an education and literacy element (such as homework assistance) and an education enrichment component [Section 8482.3(c) of the California Education Code]. Since both components are required, it is not always possible for every student to complete ALL of his or her homework

during the program, nor is it possible for it to be entirely reviewed and corrected.

Parent/guardian responsibility and involvement in their student's academic work is strongly encouraged to continue the learning process at home.

For high schools, an academic assistance element shall include, but need not be limited to, at least one of the following: tutoring, career exploration, homework assistance, or college preparation, including information about the Cal Grant Program established pursuant to Chapter 1.7 (commencing with Section 69430) of Part 42 of Division 5 of Title 3.

### **ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT**

Think Together's academic enrichment component allows for students to use academic skills in a variety of engaging activities. In addition, some schools also provide specific academic activities which support the work being done during the regular school day.

### **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

High school programs are not linked to a time or dosage. The daily physical activity component for TK-8th grade has four main objectives:

- Involve students in 20-30 minute periods of regular physical activity.
- Involve students in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity during at least 40% of physical activity time.
- Provide students with many opportunities to participate and practice skills.
- Provide students with a variety of enjoyable physical activities.

## **Student Behavior Guidelines**

The primary purpose of Think Together is to provide a safe and positive environment in which students can receive homework assistance and enrichment opportunities.

### **TK-8TH GRADE THINK TOGETHER AGREEMENTS**

Think Together believes that ultimately students themselves must commit to behaving appropriately, so students who wish to participate in our program are asked to accept four simple Think Together Agreements:

1. Be Safe.
2. Be Respectful.
3. Be Responsible.
4. Have Fun!

When program starts, we devote time to helping students understand what it means to follow these agreements in different circumstances throughout the Expanded Learning Time Program, and we re-visit this topic periodically throughout the year. Our staff is also expected to hold to these agreements in their interactions with students, parents/guardians, fellow staff members and instructional-day staff.

### **HIGH SCHOOL THINK TOGETHER PILLARS**

1. We are Family.
2. We are Empowered.

3. We are Leaders.

### **GOOD BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES**

In keeping with the purpose and agreements stated above, all students are expected to observe the following behavior guidelines:

1. Treat staff members, volunteers, and other students with respect at all times.
2. Follow directions given by staff members or volunteers.
3. Show proper respect for the buildings, grounds, equipment, and supplies.
4. Use language/behavior appropriate to the setting (no foul language, verbal insults, fighting, etc.).
5. Play in a safe manner at all times.
6. Bring all materials necessary to complete homework, including textbooks (if applicable), paper, pencils, et cetera.
7. Work quietly, without disturbing others, during the homework/study period.
8. If no homework is assigned, students will complete a supplemental academic activity provided by the program.

### **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

In the event that a student violates any of the above guidelines, the following disciplinary process will be followed:

1. A verbal and written warning will be given.
2. In the event of a second violation, the student's parent/guardian may be notified in writing of the problem and the student may be subject to suspension from the program for one or more days.
3. In the event that a third violation occurs, the student involved may be permanently dismissed from the program.

Serious violations of the behavior guidelines may result in the student being immediately dismissed from the program at the discretion of the Site Program Manager and School Administrator. The parent/guardian or other authorized person will be contacted and asked to pick up the student.

### **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

Students should refrain from bringing personal property (including electronics, valuables and collectible items) to the Think Together program. Students are expected to take reasonable precautions to protect personal property and assume ALL risk related to such property. Think Together is not responsible for lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed items that are brought to, used during, or left at the Think Together program. Students also must follow school district/charter policies regarding permitted and prohibited.

## **Student Enrollment, Attendance, and Release Guidelines**

### **STUDENT ENROLLMENT POLICY**

Think Together works with each school to enroll students in the program and to notify parents/guardians when openings are available. Students are enrolled when openings become available. If no openings are available when an application is received, the student will be placed on a waiting list and parents/guardians will be notified when there is a place for the student.

In accordance with Education Code Section 8483, students who are experiencing homelessness or are foster youth are entitled to first priority for enrollment in ASES programs. If your student meets either of these criteria, please check the appropriate box when completing the enrollment application.

Parent/guardian must complete and submit the Enrollment Application prior to a student's participation in program. By signing the Enrollment Application, the parent/guardian acknowledges receipt of, and agreement to, the policies and procedures within this Handbook. Submission of the Enrollment Application does not guarantee placement in Think Together Programs. Participation in Think Together Programs is a privilege, not a right, and a student's failure to comply with the program's rules, regulations, and policies may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to suspension or dismissal from the program.

Due to the program design of high school programs, all students are accepted to the program after the completion of registration and can begin attending immediately.

### **STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Think Together believes that attendance is a key element in determining the level of impact made on the academic lives of the students it serves. In addition, it is the intent of the Legislature that pupils participate in the full day of the program every day, in order to accomplish program goals [Section 8483(a)(2) of the California Education Code, and AB-1567].

To comply with the law and ensure the effectiveness of our program, elementary school, middle school, and/or junior high school students should participate in the full day of program every day that school is in session and the student has attended school. This will support participation in school-sponsored activities (e.g., sports, visual/performing arts performances). Failure to meet this attendance expectation could result in disenrollment. If the number of students wishing to participate in program exceeds program capacity, priority enrollment shall be given to students who attend daily.

#### **Modifications of the Attendance Policy**

Modifications of the Attendance Policy may be made on a case-by-case basis when a modification is in the best interest of the student. Such modifications must be agreed to by the Site Program Manager, the parent/guardian, and if possible, a school representative.

### **TK-8TH GRADE AUTHORIZED RELEASE OF STUDENTS POLICY**

To ensure your student's safety:

- Unless the school district/charter has a different policy, and unless the appropriate forms are completed by an authorized Parent (i.e., a Parent who is documented on the Program Enrollment Application), your student must be signed out of the program every day by an authorized adult of 18 years of age or older who is documented online in the Program Enrollment Application. In High School programs, the student is responsible for signing themselves in and out and no parent release is required.
- Students may be released only to those persons indicated on the Program Enrollment Application/ Authorized Contacts tab on the Enrollment Portal. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian who originally completed and submitted the Program Enrollment Application to document all persons to whom the student may be released, including parents/guardians with shared custody rights. Think Together staff will not arbitrate custody disputes. As long as both parents/guardians are documented as authorized release persons, the student can be released to either parent/guardian on any day, unless otherwise



- documented by the courts. A copy of court-issued custody agreements must be provided in these cases.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian who originally completed and submitted the Program Enrollment Application to provide the Site Program Manager with updated contact information and notice of any changes in the list of persons authorized to pick up the student (including in case of emergency). If a parent/guardian is being removed from the Program Enrollment Application, a court order must be provided which clearly and unambiguously indicates that the other parent/guardian no longer has the right to pick up the student. All changes in information must be noted on the online Program Enrollment Application or in a letter from the parent/guardian.
  - Each school district/charter will determine the circumstances, if any, under which a student is allowed to walk home alone or ride a district/charter-approved bus home alone. Where circumstances make it necessary and school district/charter policy permits it, permission for a student to walk alone or ride a district/charter-approved bus home alone may be granted when requested in writing by the parent/guardian or in the online Program Enrollment Application. Permission is granted on an individual basis and only if it is consistent with student safety.
  - When authorized in writing or in the online Program Enrollment Application by a parent/guardian, a student may also be released from program to attend a non-Think Together activity located on site or off site. The activity may be administered by school district/charter personnel and/or a third-party provider.
  - In case of emergency, a student may be released to law enforcement personnel if the parent/guardian or authorized emergency contact person(s) cannot be reached.
  - For the safety of the students, photo identification of the parent/guardian or designated person picking up the student may be requested at any time.
  - Think Together and its community partners are NOT accountable for incidents involving a student that occur prior to arrival at or after departure from Think Together programs, including when they are under the supervision of, or have been released from the supervision of an on-site/off-site program/activity not supervised by Think Together.

### **RELEASE OF STUDENT TO WALK ALONE OR RIDE A DISTRICT/CHARTER-APPROVED BUS HOME ALONE**

The school district/charter will determine the circumstances, if any, under which a student is allowed to walk home alone or ride a district/charter-approved bus home alone. Where circumstances make it necessary and school district/charter policy permits it, permission for a student to walk alone or ride a district/charter approved bus home alone may be granted when requested by the parent/guardian in the online Program Enrollment Application. Permission is granted on an individual basis and only if it is consistent with student safety. Permission is granted for a specified period of time, and never for more than one school year at a time. A TK-8th grade student may not sign out to walk alone or ride a district/charter-approved bus home alone before the release period at the end of program unless specific arrangements for a necessary early dismissal on a specified day or days have been indicated in the online Program Enrollment Application by the parent/guardian. Actual release time(s) for students riding a district/charter-approved bus home may vary based on site-specific bus schedules. This policy is applicable to both base and supplemental programs.

All high school students are allowed to walk home or ride district/charter approved bus unless otherwise noted by parent/guardian.

### **LATE ARRIVAL/EARLY RELEASE POLICY**

The law requires that the program establish a policy regarding reasonable early daily release of student [Section 8483(a)(1) of the California Education Code]. In order to accommodate the need for early release from the program, as well as late arrival to the program, while meeting the requirements of the law, Think Together has

the following Late Arrival/ Early Release Policy:

In order for the Think Together Expanded Learning Time Programs to qualify for state funding and for students to receive a well-rounded experience, students are expected to attend the full program, pursuant to Section 8483(a)(1) of the Education Code. A well-rounded Expanded Learning Time Program experience occurs when students attend five days each week from the end of the school day until program closure.

For safety reasons it is Think Together’s policy that students arrive to program on time and that instances of a student’s late arrival to program be documented by staff. Late arrival is defined as any time after the normal sign-in period at the beginning of program, and may be either “occasional” or “recurring.” In case of supplemental program, the parent/guardian or person authorized to drop the student off at program is requested to provide the reason for late arrival.

If a student is unable to attend the program for the full day, a parent/guardian may authorize a student to be dismissed early from program. Early release is defined as any time prior to the normal release period at the end of program, and may be either “occasional” or “recurring.” In cases of occasional early release, person(s) previously authorized by the parent/guardian to pick up the student may also authorize early release if picking the student up early on a given day.

A parent/guardian who wants a student to arrive late or be released early on a regularly recurring basis - for example, for a weekly tutoring session or religious obligation - must indicate this on the online Parent Enrollment Application or submit a signed Late Arrival/Early Release Form indicating the reason, and the period of time (hours and range of dates) for which the late arrival/early release will occur.

Authorized person(s) are required to document the time and reason for late arrival, early release, and/or release of students to on-site/off-site programs/activities not supervised by Think Together. Reasons may be any of the following:

1. Enrichment activity (attending on-site/off-site programs/activities not supervised by Think Together, or off-site activities such as Club soccer, basketball, etc.)
2. Academic support (working with student’s teacher after school, etc.)
3. Family emergency (such as death in family, catastrophic incidents, etc.).
4. Medical appointments
5. Child accident/illness
6. Transportation
7. Release due to early darkness “Dark 30” (Early release for students who walk home, generally occurs November through mid-March; release times will be pre-established by site staff)
8. Other reason (in best interest of child)

There are many students who would like to participate in Think Together; however, limited space is available. Late arrivals and early releases need to be kept to a minimum. If Think Together staff feel there is a problem, they will contact the parent/guardian to discuss ways to address the situation.

## **POLICY FOR ON-SITE/OFF-SITE RELEASE OF TK-8TH GRADE STUDENTS TO NON-THINK TOGETHER ACTIVITY**

In the interest of student safety, Think Together documents the release of students to on-site/off-site programs/

activities not supervised by Think Together. When authorized by a parent/guardian in the online Parent Enrollment Application, a student may be released from Think Together's responsibility to attend a non-Think Together program/activity administered by school district/charter personnel and/or a third-party provider located on site or off site. Think Together staff will document the time and reason for release. Think Together is not staffed to accompany students released from Think Together sponsored activities to non-Think Together sponsored activities. If the student is not expected to return to the Think Together program prior to program closure, he/she will sign themselves out and the parent/guardian assumes responsibility to make release arrangements with the other program/activity.

### **LATE PICK-UP POLICY FOR TK-8TH GRADE STUDENTS**

It is important that students be picked up on time, particularly because the Expanded Learning Time Program dismissal occurs in the evening when the rest of the school is closed and typically there are very few staff members still present. Safety concerns arise when a small number of students and expanded learning time staff members are alone on campus after the program closes.

- Students must be picked up on time.
- If the person picking up a student is going to be late, we ask that person to contact the Site Program Manager to inform her/him immediately, so appropriate staffing accommodations may be made, requiring staff to work overtime.
- If late pick-up continues to occur, the student may be dismissed from the program.
- In addition, when a student is not picked up in a timely manner, if we are unable to contact any of the people authorized to pick up the student, or anyone listed as an emergency contact, we will call law enforcement for assistance.

### **PERSONAL STUDENT INFORMATION**

Think Together complies with applicable state and federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), regarding review and privacy of student records. Pursuant to law, and at the direction of the contracting school district, parents/guardians have the right to review their student's records promptly upon request; additionally, parents/guardians have a right to have the student record corrected, such as if the record is inaccurate or misleading. Student records will be kept confidential, except as otherwise provided in law.

Student information is available to either parent/guardian unless there is a court order to the contrary that has been provided to the Site Program Manager. Please allow up to two weeks' time for production of student daily attendance records as these are manual forms maintained in off-site storage facilities and must be redacted before distribution in order to protect the privacy of other students.

### **SUPPORTING THE PROGRAM**

In order for students to have a positive experience, parents/guardians, school staff, and Think Together staff need to work together collaboratively. All policies and procedures have been established to create a safe and engaging environment for students, and to maintain the standards set forth by legal and funding guidelines. Questions and concerns about the program, and information about student behavior, are expected to be handled in a professional and courteous manner. Inappropriate conduct does not demonstrate positive problem-solving strategies for students and will not be tolerated.

Information for those interested in volunteering in our programs can be found here:

<https://thinktogether.org/volunteer/>



## **STUDENT DATA PRIVACY AND CONSENT**

By signing the Program Enrollment Application form, you are agreeing and consenting to all the policies within this Parent Student Handbook. In addition, you understand and consent to the following statements regarding the use of the third-party online learning platforms:

I understand that Think Together will facilitate the use of an online learning platform of a third-party vendor that engages my child in state-standard-specific subjects, including but not limited to English Language Arts and Math, for the purpose of improving my child's knowledge in these subjects. I understand my child's name, grade, and school ID will be provided to the vendor in order to create a user account for my child, and that my child's assessment results within the online learning platform also will be stored by the vendor and monitored by Think Together staff to facilitate growth. I understand that I can request access to my child's account and progress at any time by contacting the Think Together Site Program Manager.