

Time and Learning: Time as a Resource to Support Student Success



Overview

Since students spend 80 percent of their waking hours outside of school, states are increasingly viewing time as both a resource and a strategy for narrowing the opportunity gap and supporting student success. Many state policymakers are reexamining their instructional time requirements and comparing them to those in other states and nations. While some states are studying cost-effective ways of adding time to the school day or year, others have granted school districts flexibility to compress instructional time into four-day school weeks to help stretch school budgets. Research shows that merely adding instructional time to the school day does not necessarily result in student gains. Instead, time's potential as an effective education reform strategy depends upon its effective use and whether it serves those students most in need of extra learning opportunities.¹ States have also found benefits in partnering with community organizations such as afterschool providers to ease the burden on schools and school-day teachers and to engage a fuller range of community resources. The following summaries of recent state policies describe how some states have added learning time for students and provide examples of extended school day (also referred to as extended or expanded learning time) pilot programs.

Recent State Policy Actions

Arkansas Study under Act 593 and I.S.P. 2011-25

(2011) Since Arkansas is considering increasing its school instructional day requirement from 178 days to 200, this study examines the implications of lengthening the school year and/or school day. The scope of the study includes an investigation into added instructional time costs, staffing and academic implications, and international and national instructional time comparisons.

Iowa S.F. 2284 (2012) This law created a school instructional time task force to conduct a study of minimum school day and school year requirements. The law also encourages extended learning for remedial students.

North Carolina H.B. 765 (2011) This law created the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study the Current Length of the School Year. The commission was charged with studying strategies for making North Carolina's children competitive in the 21st century; the cost of implement-

ing a longer school year; a plan for implementation; the cost of remediation in public schools and colleges; the effects of summer learning loss; how the current calendar affects low-income and at-risk students; how the current calendar affects math and science scores; and narrowing the achievement gap.

Extended School Day in Practice TASC Expanded Schools

Expanded schools are public elementary and middle schools in New York City, Baltimore and New Orleans working with The After-School Corporation (TASC) to extend the learning day by at least 35 percent and to shape that time to meet the needs and interests of students.² The foundation of each TASC Expanded school includes a balanced curriculum, school-community partnerships, engaging and personalized instruction, and a sustainable cost model.

The Expanded model has had positive results for students. Eighty-five percent of teachers in Expanded schools have reported improvements in learning among participating students. For example, New York City Expanded schools increased their math proficiency level by 5.9 percentage points compared to the city-wide average increase of 3.3 points. Attendance improved as well, with participating students attending seven more days of school per year compared to non-participating students.^{3,4}

Massachusetts' Extended Learning Time (ELT) Model and Approach

The Massachusetts Extended Learning Time (ELT) initiative began in 2005 when the Legislature appropriated funds to the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide planning grants for schools to explore extending and redesigning the school day. Today, 19 schools in nine districts serving more than 10,500 Massachusetts students have adopted the ELT model.⁵

The Massachusetts ELT initiative model authorizes schools to volunteer to add at least 300 hours of school time to their calendars for all students. The ELT initiative also prioritizes strengthening community partnerships and finding ways to further integrate these partnerships into the school



day and students' learning experience. Community partners can become involved in the initiative by offering in-school programming or internships. Integrating community partners into the school day not only offers students expanded learning opportunities, but also allows schools to use community partners' resources and expertise.⁶

Conclusion

Many ELT schools use school-day teachers and implement an extended school day for the entire school population. This approach can be costly and entail teacher-hour negotiations, however. State policymakers who want to increase instructional hours will want to think about whether to increase them for the entire school or for a targeted population. Working with community partners, such as after-school providers, may help not only to ease the burden for schools and school-day teachers, but also to take advantage of community resources and expertise. Most ELT school days still end at 3:30 or 4:00 pm, which may leave a gap in care for the children of working parents; coordination with or use of after-school providers to add learning time may

be an option to consider. Finally, restructuring the school day and adding school time have been most effective when instructional time is of high-quality, used effectively and well-planned.

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Notes

1. Julie Aronson, Joy Zimmerman, and Lisa Carlos, *Improving Student Achievement by Extending School: Is it Just a Matter of Time?* (San Francisco: WestEd, 1998).
2. The Afterschool Corporation, "More Time for Learning" (New York: The Afterschool Corporation, last modified 2012), <http://www.expandedschools.org/how-we-do-it/more-time-learning>.
3. The After-School Corporation, *Reimagining the 21st Century School Day* (New York: TASC, 2010).
4. Saskia Traill, "ExpandED Schools: Supporting Local Implementation," presentation at a seminar for legislative education staff after the Fall Forum of the National Conference of State Legislatures, Tampa, Fla., December 2011.
5. Annenberg Institute for Reform, "The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative," (Providence: Annenberg Institute for Reform, last modified April 2012), <http://annenberginstitute.org/profiles-transformation-massachusetts-expanded-learning-time-initiativenational-center-time-and-lear>.
6. Education Commission of the States, *Learning Time in America: Trends to Reform the America School Calendar* (Denver: ECS, 2011), 33.



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