



States Need to Fill in the Gaps on Expanded Learning Time

Troubling Lack of Detail Seen in No Child Left Behind Waiver Applications

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Introduction

Last fall 11 states—Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Tennessee—submitted applications to the U.S. Department of Education seeking waivers from some parts of the outdated No Child Left Behind law, which requires states to adopt standards, assessments, and accountability programs, and set a goal of 100 percent student proficiency in reading and math by 2014. All 11 states have now received those waivers, and 26 states and the District of Columbia subsequently submitted applications seeking flexibility from the law. Most of the first-round states, however, missed an important opportunity to rethink how they use time in school to promote student achievement.

In return for flexibility on some parts of the No Child Left Behind law, the U.S. Department of Education asked states to develop plans addressing three areas of reform: setting college- and career-ready expectations for all students; developing differentiated recognition, accountability, and support systems; and supporting effective instruction and leadership.¹

The U.S. Department of Education also gave states three opportunities—one required, and two optional—for redesigning the school calendar as part of their waiver plan.

The waiver process offers states new flexibility to use significant funding streams for expanding learning time. Specifically, if granted a waiver districts will be able to use their Title I set-aside, which is 20 percent of a district's Title I funding, for a broader array of extra programming designed to increase student achievement, including high-quality expanded learning-time programs.² These funds were previously limited to Supplemental Education Services—which funds activities to increase student achievement in low-income schools, such as tutoring—and choice-related

transportation, which funds transportation costs for students in low-performing, low-income schools who opt to transfer to a higher-performing school. The new flexibility allows states and districts to use this noteworthy funding source to implement research-based strategies to increase achievement.

Furthermore, states could opt for flexibility to use their existing 21st Century Community Learning Center, or 21CCLC, funds for lengthening the school day, week, or year. Without a waiver this federal funding is limited to enrichment programming outside of usual school hours, such as voluntary after-school or summer programs.

Opening up these previously restricted big pots of money is a welcome opportunity for states that struggle to fund a longer school day or year in a meaningful way.

States were also required to identify their lowest-performing schools—classified as priority schools—and detail intervention strategies for these schools aligned with the seven turnaround principles the U.S. Department of Education established, including “redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration.”³

The opportunity to increase learning time is just a small part of the very ambitious reforms states are including in their waiver applications.⁴

But since effective teachers using expanded learning time is a proven strategy to increase student achievement among high-poverty students, it demands states’ attention. As states prepared their waiver applications we cautioned them to carefully think through their plan to expand learning time. We suggested examples of best practices to outline a path states should take to comprehensively redesign their school day or year as part of their strategy to turnaround low-performing schools, a key part of the waiver application.⁵ Yet few states provided specific detail on how districts and schools should reconsider time in school.

After reading and comparing each state’s application, however, we discovered that most states did not take industrious approaches to restructuring time in school. Eight of the 11 states in the first round asked for flexibility in using their 21CCLC grants, but only three—Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Oklahoma—provided any insight into how they will use the 21CCLC funding differently. This begs the question: What do states intend to do with this new flexibility?

To make matters worse, Colorado’s, New Mexico’s, and Tennessee’s applications provided very little detail about using time differently. They failed to think strategically about time and instead just listed more time as a possible intervention strategy. More time is a proven intervention strategy, yet additional time will only lead to improved academic achievement if the schedule is redesigned to more effectively use time for both teachers and students.

Schools and districts in those states may be in danger of merely adding time to the end of the school day or year, which will not lead to improved achievement. These states wasted an opportunity to explain their thinking and approach to increasing learning time and did little more than pay lip service to the intervention strategy.

With the exception of a few applications, states failed to prioritize schedule redesign. Only one state stands out—Massachusetts—because of its plan to provide guidance on how districts and schools can best use additional time to improve instruction, add time for enrichment, and get the most out of teacher-collaboration time. While the majority of states (Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Oklahoma) demonstrate a commitment to schedule redesign as part of a package of interventions, they do not provide much specific detail about increasing learning time.

The analysis is far from exhaustive, but it does provide a helpful lens to examine each state’s approach to increasing learning time. We grouped states based on how detailed their waiver application’s proposals for increasing learning time were.

Massachusetts delivers a standout plan for schedule redesign

State approaches to learning time in NCLB waiver applications

Standout	Massachusetts
Committed but missing details	Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oklahoma
Lacks strategic thinking	Colorado, New Mexico, Tennessee

As states begin to implement the plans laid out in their applications, we make recommendations for tackling the lack of detail in states’ learning-time proposals. Namely, we recommend that:

- **States should create guidance that helps districts and schools think about their current time use and how they could redesign the calendar to more effectively use time.** States can use existing research and examples from best practices as they develop tools and guidelines for districts and schools. In addition, the eight states that were awarded flexibility in the use of their 21CCLC funds should develop strong plans for how those funds can be used to redesign the school calendar for all students.
- **Districts and schools should analyze current data to determine the specific needs of their students.** Based on their analyses, districts and schools must then consider how additional time can be used to address current weakness in their schedule. Schools and districts can develop an expanded schedule for schools allowing more time for the subjects where students are struggling, as well as time for teachers to meet, analyze data, and develop individualized approaches to addressing the deficiencies.

- **Districts and schools should monitor the new schedule to ensure that the additional time is used well.** Districts and schools must be willing to make adjustments to better address their students' needs. Monitoring can help safeguard against districts and schools wasting additional time.
- **The U.S. Department of Education should push states to address the lack of detail about learning time in their waiver applications and keep thinking about how to better use school time.** During the application-review process administered by the U.S. Department of Education, peer reviewers provided feedback and states revised their applications based on identified weaknesses.⁶ The U.S. Department of Education should maintain a similar relationship with states to guide the implementation process. And it should provide clear, high standards for implementing high-quality expanded learning time based on successful schools already in operation.

Despite the lack of detail, it's not too late. States, districts, schools, and the U.S. Department of Education can still work to redesign the school calendar to incorporate time in a meaningful way as states begin to implement intervention strategies in their low-performing schools.

This brief takes a close look at state plans to increase learning time and how states aim to use the additional time well. First, we describe why expanding learning time is an important intervention strategy in low-performing schools. Then we provide examples documenting the sparse detail found in the applications, followed by some of the highlights from the applications relating to more time. Finally, we make recommendations for all stakeholders to assist and monitor the implementation process for the first-round winners and the future rounds of waiver applications.

Why should states expand learning time?

Increased instructional time and schedule redesign must be part of the package of reforms schools and districts implement if they are serious about turning around their low-performing schools. Adding more time to the school calendar and redesigning the schedule to ensure the additional time is used well is woven throughout the U.S. Department of Education's strategy to turnaround the country's lowest-performing schools. For instance, more time is an allowable turnaround intervention in other federally administered programs such as the School Improvement Grants, Investing in Innovation Fund, Race to the Top, and new flexibility under No Child Left Behind.

The U.S. Department of Education was wise to require states to increase learning time in their waiver applications. Schools across the country demonstrate that additional time used effectively leads to improved student achievement and benefits teachers.⁷ Nineteen schools in Massachusetts, for example, are funded by a state initiative to increase

learning time by at least 300 hours per year, which led to increased proficiency on state tests in English language arts, math, and science in 2010-11.⁸ And Balsz Elementary School District in Arizona saw an increase in test scores between 2009 and 2012 after lengthening the school year to 200 days.⁹

Further, schools in the Recovery School District, or RSD, in Louisiana feature a longer school day and year. On top of that the lowest-performing students attend an additional five weeks of school per year. The district was formed to turn around the lowest-performing schools, and the effort is working. Between 2007 and 2010 the percentage of students scoring basic or above on state tests in the RSD increased from 23 percent to 43 percent, a sure sign of movement in the right direction.¹⁰

Finally, a recent analysis of data on instructional time from 35 charter schools in New York City reveals that the schools with at least 25 percent more instructional time compared to traditional public schools boast higher gains in English language arts and math.¹¹

The key point is that more time will only lead to improved student outcomes if it is used well. Instead of just adding minutes or hours to the school day or year, districts and schools must intentionally redesign the school calendar to incorporate the additional time for core academics, enrichment such as arts and music, and maximization of time for teacher-collaboration and professional development to review student data and make plans to improve their classroom work.¹²

Every part of successful schedule redesign is deliberate. It starts with a focus on clear instructional goals and use of data to determine how the additional time should be used to best meet the needs of students and teachers. Thus it is vital that states use their new waiver authority to help districts and schools plan how they will add time and redesign the school calendar.

Given the impressive outcomes at schools that have comprehensively redesigned and rethought their calendar, the opportunity to redesign the school day in the lowest-performing schools and the flexibility to use 21CCLC funds and the Title I set-aside for expanded learning time seems like a no-brainer. Yet states provided few details as they outlined their approach to redesigning the school day, week, or year.

How we rated the states

We combed the State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support section of each state's application to get a sense of how they intended to use more time as part of their strategy to turnaround their lowest-performing schools. In addition we looked for details addressing the new flexible use of the Title I set-aside and 21CCLC funds.

We evaluated the plans on their inclusion of the basic building blocks for effective use of time—increasing time for academics, enrichment, and teacher collaboration—among other key indicators of successful approaches to schedule redesign. While inclusion of these basic building blocks does not represent a comprehensive approach to increasing learning time, we view them as the minimum requirements for successful expanded-time programs. These building blocks are all included in the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of high-quality expanded learning time.¹³

States were grouped based on the level of detail regarding the use of time in school found in their waiver applications. To be considered a “standout” state the application had to include details on each of the basic building blocks of the effective use of time, allow focus schools—low-performing schools that show large achievement gaps between students but not as severe underperformance as priority schools—to expand learning time, explain how they would use flexibility for their 21CCLC funding, and provide detailed plans and support for districts and schools incorporating additional time into the school calendar. States in the “committed but missing details” group demonstrated a commitment to adding more time to the school calendar but did not provide detail addressing each core building block. States in the “lacks strategic thinking” group failed to address the basic building blocks of effective use of time and lacked clear thinking on how districts and schools should use more time wisely.¹⁴

Surprising lack of detail

We found only one state plan that stands out, which means most states did not present a clear schedule-redesign plan. While each state included the use of more time in their applications, most do not have a comprehensive plan that aligns with research and good practice, namely increasing time for academics, enrichment, and teacher collaboration.

Below is a table summarizing learning-time proposals in each state’s application. As one can see, states lacked detail in many of the categories included in the table.

The first column describes each state’s approach to increased learning time in priority schools. As noted earlier, priority schools must redesign the school day, week, or year. The next three columns identify if states address the essential elements of effective use of time: more time spent on core academics, enrichment, and teacher collaboration. Column five summarizes how states will increase learning time in focus schools. Focus schools are not required to increase learning time but analysis of the applications revealed some states also suggested more time and schedule redesign as an intervention strategy that can be used in focus schools. Lastly, the chart indicates if states chose the optional waiver regarding using 21CCLC funds to expand time. If a state provided a description of its planned activities, the chart notes that.

Each entry includes a page number for the approved state waiver applications so that readers can view the section for themselves.¹⁵

We chose the categories below because they are the basic building blocks of effective use of time. This is not an exhaustive or comprehensive summary, but rather a look at how states are using this opportunity to reconsider the use of time in school.

Grouping states on the basic building blocks of effective expanded time

States' proposals for increasing learning time in NCLB waiver applications, in detail

	State	More time: priority schools	More time: core academics	More time: enrichment programming	More time: teacher collaboration	More time: focus schools	21CCLC flexibility
STAND OUT	Massachusetts	Priority schools must implement interventions aligned to all the Conditions for School Effectiveness, which includes tiered instruction and adequate learning time. (p. 44-47)	Yes. (p.57)	Yes. (p. 57)	Yes. Schools should redesign the school day, for example, to facilitate school-based learning communities for teachers and create opportunities for peer-led support and accountability. (p. 56)	Focus schools must use the Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment to identify which interventions should be implemented. Interventions include tiered and adequate learning time. (p. 54)	Requested flexibility. Flexibility will allow freedom to think differently about the funding source and streamline the application process for districts. (p. 77)
	Florida	Priority schools must provide additional time for learning, and the local education agency must redesign the master schedule to allow for common planning time for teachers. (p. 108)			Yes. (p. 108)	Not required, but if a school cannot remove itself from the focus school category within three years it must implement district-managed turnaround options, which include 300 hours of additional instructional time for all students. (p. 123)	Requested flexibility, but no detail provided on how flexibility will be used.
COMMITTED BUT MISSING DETAIL	Georgia	Providing additional learning time for students is a non-negotiable turnaround principle in priority schools. (p. 72)	In focus schools. (p. 83)	In focus schools. (p. 83)	In priority and focus schools. (p. 74, 83)	Providing additional learning time for students is a non-negotiable turnaround principle in focus schools (p. 82)	Did not request 21CCLC flexibility.
	Indiana	Implement turnaround interventions, including restructuring the academic schedule, and implementing tutoring or expanded learning time tied to Mass Insight's, an education nonprofit consultant, readiness framework. Indiana was previously participating in Mass Insight's School Development Network. (p. 86-87)	Yes. (p. 87)		Yes (p. 87, 91-92)	Implement turnaround interventions, including restructuring the academic schedule, and implementing tutoring or expanded learning time tied to Mass Insight's readiness framework. (p. 86-87)	Requested flexibility, but no detail provided on how flexibility will be used.

COMMITTED BUT MISSING DETAIL	Kentucky	Priority schools must revise their Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, or longer-term plans, which includes designing the school day to maximize teacher collaboration and student learning time. (p. 70)			Yes. (p. 70,79)	Focus schools must revise their Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, including designing the school day to maximize learning time. (p. 79)	Requested flexibility. Can possibly be used toward “Encircle Each Student Plan,” which identifies extremely successful students that otherwise might not be identified for success. (89)
	Minnesota	Increased learning time and schedule redesign will be considered after an audit at the school examining current use of time in priority schools. (p. 106)	Yes. (p. 106)		Yes. (p. 106)	Focus schools will implement plans based on turnaround principles and instructional interventions, including increased learning time (p. 125)	Did not request 21CCLC flexibility.
	New Jersey	Effective use of time is an allowable turnaround intervention in priority schools. (p. 57)			Yes. (p. 40, 54)		Requested flexibility, but no detail provided on how flexibility will be used.
	Oklahoma	Extend the school day for students and teachers is an allowable intervention in priority schools. (p. 67)	Only listed as a requirement for flexibility of 21CCLC funding. (p. 71)	Only listed as a requirement for flexibility of 21CCLC funding. (p. 71)	Yes. (p. 67, 69, 70)	Interventions will be picked from Menu of Interventions, established by the state. Extended school day, week, or year is on the Menu of Interventions and Supports for Schools Improvement. (p. 79)	Requested flexibility. Priority schools already receiving 21CCLC funding may use a portion of it toward extended learning time in compliance with requirements laid out by the state education agency. (p. 54-55)
LACKS STRATEGIC THINKING	Colorado	Interventions must align with established School Improvement Grant turnaround or transformation models. (p. 86)				Allowable option. (106)	Did not request 21CCLC flexibility.
	New Mexico	Priority schools must implement four of the seven turnaround principles documented in the application, which include redesign the school day, week, or year. (p. 78)			Looking to use SIG interventions in priority and focus schools, including providing teachers with more time for collaboration. (p. 82, 89)	Focus schools must implement four of the seven turnaround principles, which include redesign the school day, week, or year. (p. 87)	Requested flexibility, but no detail provided on how flexibility will be used.
	Tennessee	Interventions in the state’s lowest-performing schools are aligned with the U.S. Department of Education turnaround principles, including flexibility to redesign learning time and instructional program. (p. 54-55)				Tennessee’s Department of Education is offering a competitive grant to focus schools. In order to be competitive schools must pick some initiatives to implement from a list that includes extending the school day. (p. 67)	Requested flexibility, but no detail provided on how flexibility will be used.

In addition to thinking about using more time for academics, enrichment, and teacher collaboration, states must develop comprehensive plans to incorporate additional time wisely. Unfortunately, while reading the applications it became clear to us that some states failed to think through how time can be used in a more meaningful way. Here we provide examples showing the lack of detail.

Colorado's, Georgia's, and Indiana's applications do not even include the word “re-design” while discussing expanding learning time. Schedule redesign is integral to incorporating additional time into the school schedule to ensure the time is used well and not just tacked onto the end of the day or year. The redesigned schedule, for example, should include additional time for targeted instruction as well as teacher collaboration and professional development to improve teacher practice.

Colorado's application does not detail increasing learning time as an intervention in priority schools, though expanded learning time is addressed as an allowable use of the Title I set-aside. While it is noteworthy that Colorado will use Title I set-aside funding toward expanding learning time, they missed an opportunity to flesh out their plan for increasing learning time as part of their approach to turning around all low-performing schools.

Tennessee's application only mentions increased learning time as an available option to low-performing schools. The application does not specify how the additional time should be used and there is no mention of more time for core academics, enrichment programming, or teacher collaboration.

Unfortunately, **New Mexico's** application only provides a little more detail. The New Mexico Public Education Department hopes to extend flexibility under their School Improvement Grant program, which allows principals at priority and focus schools to design a schedule that lengthens the school day or year, suggests scheduling math and literacy for 90–120 minutes per day, and provides teachers with collaboration time.¹⁶ While these are important aspects of schedule redesign, this is the only specific detail relating to more time in New Mexico's application, giving readers no clear picture of the state's plan to increase learning time.

These examples give us little information on how states approach increasing learning time. While it is good that more time is an allowable intervention strategy for low-performing schools in each application, more time must be implemented intentionally. These states failed to develop thoughtful plans to use more time wisely.

It's not all bad news: Bright spots from the applications

Despite the lack of detail seen throughout the applications, there are some notable examples of thoughtful calendar redesign. Massachusetts's application showcases the

most extensive thinking on redesigning the school calendar to include additional time for core academics, enrichment, teacher collaboration, and individualized instruction. Reading through the application it becomes clear that Massachusetts not only understands the value of more time, but also the value of using time well.

Massachusetts leads the way

Massachusetts launched a statewide initiative in 2005 to fund schools to redesign the school calendar to incorporate 300 additional hours. The waiver application builds on the successes of the existing expanded time schools, which provide solid examples of how to use time in a more effective way. It also cites numerous examples from schools that redesigned the calendar and now boast impressive academic results. The Silvia Elementary School, for example, used the additional time to incorporate project-based learning into the schedule in both core academic classes and electives.¹⁷

The state's approach to turning around the lowest-performing schools is built on its already established Conditions for School Effectiveness, which identified 11 research-based strategies for improving student learning, including adequate learning time.¹⁸ Increasing learning time is thus a strategic part of the state's package of interventions targeted to low-performing schools.

Deliberate redesign of the school calendar is mentioned throughout Massachusetts's waiver application, emphasizing its existing commitment to rethinking the school schedule. The application also includes several examples that illustrate intervention strategies in action, including how a district might redesign the school day or year. For example, the application says:

This additional time is focused on a small set of clear and ambitious goals for student learning in which each student has a schedule and academic program tailored to address individual needs, which may include tutoring and other academic supports. Students are provided with a broad array of enrichment opportunities that deepen their engagement in areas including the arts, foreign languages, hands-on science, business, community service learning, and leadership.¹⁹

This example shows how the state is helping districts think carefully about how additional time could be incorporated into the school schedule, and it prompts the type of considerations and questions districts should contemplate as they rethink the school schedule.

In order to provide further guidance, Massachusetts developed documents to guide the implementation of intervention strategies, including redesigning the schedule, to ensure school and district leaders get the most out of the additional time for teacher collaboration and student learning.²⁰

While Massachusetts is the clear leader when it comes to state action on school time, states' waiver applications include some highlights. These highlights, however, do not necessarily indicate a detailed plan for how districts and schools should redesign the school calendar to incorporate more time. They are more like bright spots that can be used as building blocks for comprehensive plans to redesign the school schedule. We review them here.

Analysis of how current time is used

Taking a close look at the current use of time shows Georgia, Kentucky, and Minnesota will think strategically about how they can better use time to improve instruction based on current schedule weaknesses.

Georgia's application cites extended learning time as an example of an intervention strategy that schools are using to close the achievement gap. Improvement specialists will help school administrators analyze existing schedules, identify weaknesses, and adjust the calendar adding more time for teachers and students.²¹

Minnesota, too, requires priority schools to conduct a time audit to assess how schools and districts are using time before they redesign the school calendar.²² Additionally, Minnesota's application suggests examining what effect noninstructional factors have on student learning, such as "which policies or practices are limiting the amount of instructional time available for students."²³

Kentucky's application also suggests that schools review the current schedule to see where time could be reallocated. The application recommends schools consider changing the master schedule and reducing time between classes.²⁴

Monitoring the new schedule

More time is only beneficial if used well, meaning ongoing assessment is necessary to evaluate the effect of additional time. Schedule adjustments are often necessary based on the continuing monitoring for school leaders and teachers to find the right balance of time dedicated toward instruction, enrichment programming, and teacher collaboration.

Minnesota's application suggests that plans to extend learning time should "include a system of ongoing measurement of student achievement" to make sure that more time has the intended effect on student achievement.²⁵

Likewise, **Oklahoma's** application calls for ongoing assessment and evaluation of instructional time, which is necessary to "refine and sustain expanded learning programs."²⁶

Professional development

Professional development can help teachers and administrators strategize how to alter the way they use time in class and improve teachers' instructional strategies overall.

New Jersey's application included guidance on the effective use of time, which includes professional development for both teachers and school leaders. For instance, the application suggests "professional development for all teachers on effective use of instructional time including effective transitions," and "[requiring] professional development for school leaders on effective scheduling to support learning for students and teachers."²⁷

New Mexico also proposed to train school leaders in turnaround principles including redesigning the school day, week, or year.²⁸

Repurposing the 21st Century Community Learning Center funds

Oklahoma included great detail about how they will use their 21CCLC funds to expand learning time. The application states that priority schools already receiving 21CCLC funding may use a portion of that funding toward extended learning time. Further, the application specifies requirements that must be met if a school extends learning time, such as engaged learning, intentional programming, prepared staff, and ongoing assessment and improvement.

Each requirement is explained in detail. The explanation of the intentional programming requirement, for example, states, "the best programs are structured with explicit goals and activities designed with these goals in mind."²⁹ These requirements will push schools to think carefully about how to use their 21CCLC funds differently, ensuring the additional time is used well.

Massachusetts reports that the flexibility to redirect their 21CCLC funding will allow district administrators to improve instruction and better serve their students. The application also notes that this flexibility may permit better coordination of state-level grant application processes.³⁰

Stakeholders think more time in school is a good idea

As states, districts, and schools work to redesign the school schedule, stakeholder support is essential to ensure all parties agree on the goals and are prepared to support a new calendar.

While compiling their original waiver application, **New Jersey** added guidance to the application on allowable uses of Title I set-aside funds, including extending the length of the school day, based on feedback from stakeholder groups.³¹

In **Massachusetts** district superintendents voiced their support for greater flexibility to implement “high impact strategies,” which include lengthening the school day or year.³²

Title I set-aside flexibility

These states were hungry to open up the previously restricted Title I set-aside funding to implement high-quality expanded learning time.

Georgia found that students receiving Supplemental Education Services, which are free academic services for students in low-income schools, were not performing better than students in matched control groups. Georgia therefore proposed using a portion of the Title I set-aside toward expanded learning time programs that are “tailored to needs of their school that would have the capacity to serve more students in need of such additional support.”³³

In the description of programming now allowed under the Title I set-aside, **Colorado** provides a detailed definition of expanded learning time that includes more time for core subjects, incorporates enrichment programming into the schedule, and designates more time for teacher planning, professional development, and data analysis.³⁴

These bright spots are noteworthy. They indicate states are starting to think about how to capitalize on additional time. But since the bright spots do not amount to comprehensive plans, there is still work to be done to redesign the calendar.

Recommendations

The lack of thorough detail about increased learning time in the first-round waiver applications is disappointing. Most states neglected this chance to rethink the school calendar to benefit both students and teachers. We offer the following recommendations to address the lack of detail as states get to work improving their low-performing schools:

- **States should develop guidelines promoting high-quality expanded learning time.** States should create tools and guidelines that help districts and schools think about schedule redesign at the local level. These guidelines should allow flexibility so that schools and districts redesign the school calendar to fit their specific student needs. States would also be wise to examine a recent report from the National Center on Time & Learning, “Time Well Spent: Eight Powerful Practices of Successful

Expanded-Time Schools,” which details what states must consider as they develop expanded time programs.³⁵

- **States should encourage schools to add 300 additional hours to the standard school schedule to allow more time for the three key areas: academics, enrichment programming, and teacher collaboration.** Research and good practices demonstrate that more time is necessary for high-poverty students and schools to see significant results. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the additional time for students and teachers, the schedule redesign must incorporate more time for core academics, enrichment activities, and teacher collaboration.³⁶ Additional time must be implemented strategically, or else it too easily becomes wasted.
- **States need to outline how they will use their 21CCLC funding to increase learning time.** This funding was previously restricted to voluntary activities and programming outside of normal school hours, such as before or after school, and during the summer. This welcome flexibility allows states, districts, and schools to use 21CCLC money to fund the programs that best fit the needs of their students, be it outside of school hours or lengthening the school day or year. In addition to the substantive guidance that states should be providing for all expanded learning time schools, states should also help districts and schools determine which programs best suit the needs of their students and ensure 21CCLC funds are used effectively and efficiently.
- **Districts and schools must implement additional time strategically.** More time should be implemented to target the needs of students, based on data analysis. There is little point adding time to the day or year without thinking through what purpose that time can serve. Districts and schools should analyze data to assess student weaknesses and then set short- and long-term goals to address those needs. Schedule redesign should be aligned to those goals and their incorporation of additional time should be deliberate.
- **Districts should monitor schedule redesign.** As with any new intervention strategy, schedule redesign often requires adjustments. Districts should require schools to continuously assess if the additional time is helping students and teachers achieve their goals. Schools must be willing to make adjustments as necessary. Districts and schools should commit to performance agreements with the state that set goals for student achievement and other outcomes over a three-year period.
- **The U.S. Department of Education should push states to address the lack of detail.** More time and schedule redesign is a powerful intervention strategy that should not be overlooked. As states begin to implement the plans laid out in their waiver applications, the U.S. Department of Education should continue to press states about how they can improve their plans. The department should also require future waiver applicants to carefully outline their approach to increasing learning time.

Conclusion

Schedule redesign is only one small part of the much larger approach to turning around low-performing schools. Even so, most states' No Child Left Behind waiver applications show a disappointing lack of detail on learning time. While they've done some careful thinking about schedule redesign, states must continue to think critically and comprehensively about their current use of time and how it can be better used to improve instruction.

More time used well can lead to powerful results. There is a growing body of research detailing best practices that states can use as guidance, so there is no excuse for providing sparse detail if states are serious about schedule redesign.

Waivers open up sizeable funding streams for expanding learning time. Yet neither states nor the U.S. Department of Education should be satisfied with the bare minimum when thinking about schedule redesign. It would be quite easy for a priority school to add some time to the end of the school day, satisfying the requirement, and not see any change in student outcomes. States must ensure that districts and schools have the guidance and information necessary to think critically about how more time can be used to the advantage of students and teachers. As is the case with all other intervention strategies, additional learning time and schedule redesign should be thought of as one part of a larger approach to improving instruction and learning.

Increasing learning time in school is easy, but using additional time wisely is hard. Simply adding more time to the end of the day or year is wasted. For the most part states did not treat time as a valuable resource in their waiver applications. They would be wise to keep thinking about meaningful schedule redesign as they work to implement intervention strategies, because after all, the clock is ticking.

Disclosure

Cynthia G. Brown, Vice President for Education Policy at the Center for American Progress, served as an alternate peer reviewer for the first round of NCLB waivers. She reviewed a draft of this brief. But she did not share information or engage in conversation about the waiver application she read with the author or staff at the Center for American Progress.

Endnotes

- 1 For more information see: "ESEA Flexibility," available at <http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>.
- 2 U.S. Department of Education, "ESEA Flexibility Frequently Asked Questions," October 3, 2011.
- 3 U.S. Department of Education, "ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance" (2012).
- 4 For more information on other reforms included in the first-round waiver applications, see: Jeremy Ayers, "No Child Left Behind Waiver Applications: Are They Ambitious and Achievable?" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2011), available at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/12/nclb_waivers.html.
- 5 Isabel Owen, "Take Your Time: Why States Should Use Education Waivers to Increase Learning Time" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2011), available at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/09/waivers_elt.html.
- 6 While the reviewers asked some states to address concerns about interventions and supports in low-performing schools, they did not reference schedule redesign specifically.
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