



Choosing More Time for Students

The What, Why, and How of Expanded Learning

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Setting the Stage

A crescendo of support from education researchers, analysts, reform advocates, and lawmakers about the need for additional learning time for our nation's under-performing students may well result in the coming months in meaningful reform. In fact, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings believes that the expansion of learning time will be the next major push in school reform.¹ The reason: our nation's public school students need to meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century but they simply cannot in public school systems that remain much the same as they were 50 years ago. The shift in educational rigor that globalization has ushered in is pushing policymakers to embrace systemic change in public education, with particular focus on closing achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers.

In rethinking what it will take for our public schools to better serve students who are academically behind, wisdom tell us that a comprehensive approach that encompasses numerous options will provide the best opportunity to support student learning. The expansion of learning time can serve as one effective vehicle to modernize our schools because it allows teachers, principals, community organizations and leaders, and parents to build multiple curriculums to best educate our children to succeed in the 21st century. Expanded learning time turns dissatisfaction with the limitations of the current six-hour, 180-day school year into a proactive strategy that will create a new school structure for children.

Making more and better use of learning time by lengthening the school day, week, or year doesn't just change what happens between the hours of 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. Expanding learning time changes what happens from 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. and often encompasses additional days in the school calendar throughout the year to accelerate student learning and development. In short, expanding time for learning will revolutionize the way we teach our children.

To navigate through this forthcoming and thorough-going school reform effort, this paper will define what expanded learning time means, highlight what model programs look like when used effectively, and address how to successfully implement such reform efforts. As will become clear, expanded learning time is all about using time in ways that greatly benefit our students.

Choosing More Time for Students

What is Expanded Learning Time?

Expanded learning time is a school-wide improvement strategy to boost student academic performance, close achievement gaps, and expand enrichment opportunities. The policy definition we prefer is the lengthening of the school day, school week or school year for all students in a given school. The purpose: to focus on core academics *and* enrichment activities to enhance student success. Such an increase in academic learning time requires an engaging, rigorous curricula as well as activities that expand the opportunities typically available to students. Because expanded learning time initiatives have the potential to result in substantial student achievement gains and other positive outcomes, it is widely considered an important strategy for low-performing, high-poverty schools.

At the core of expanded learning time is a critical and fundamental principle that cannot be overlooked—the complete redesign of the school’s educational program. Successful implementation of expanded learning initiatives occur in tandem with other reform strategies and practices that take place through the redesign process. Without conjoining expanded learning time with the redesign principle, more time risks being “more of the same” and a promising school improvement strategy becomes a band-aid.

Expanded learning time schools formally incorporate the after-school hours into the official school day or add days to the official school calendar. These schools align rigorous academic and enrichment content with curriculum standards and student needs, are typically led by regular teachers and paraprofessionals, and frequently partner with successful community-based or other local organizations to provide enrichment opportunities and support.

Over the years, expanded or extended learning opportunities have been described as encompassing an array of activities, including before- and after-school programming, tutoring or summer programming, early childhood education, supplemental educational services, distance learning, and school-based or school-connected cultural and recreational activities. In addition, study hall, homework clubs, advanced coursework opportunities, and block scheduling or double periods have commonly been considered expanded learning time activities.

While such programs and activities extend learning time or use earmarked periods of time in new or non-traditional ways, they differ in format and content from expanded learning time initiatives that redesign a school’s entire educational program.

Education advocates, researchers, and academics are currently assessing how much time is necessary to bring underperforming students to proficiency and put them on the path to long-term success. Although the debate continues, current thinking is that schools need to expand learning time by a minimum of 30 percent. The Center for American Progress, together with Massachusetts 2020, an educational nonprofit institution,² is promoting the expansion of learning time for high-poverty, low-performing schools by no less than the equivalent of two hours per day, or 360 hours per year, to the districts' standard school schedule. This is roughly the equivalent of 30 percent more time. Other efforts, such as the Knowledge is Power Program nationwide network of charter schools, are expanding learning time by as much as 62 percent.

Why Expanded Learning Time?

Expanded Learning Time is just one strategy with the potential to boost student achievement—but a promising one. It considers time a resource and capitalizes on the best uses of learning time while expanding it. This approach provides schools with added flexibility to exercise innovation in a very deliberate manner. Time, as a strategy, can be conceptualized in multiple ways. Four constructs of additional time are presented below.

Time as an Enabler: The expansion of learning time allows schools to do what is being asked of them—to help all students meet proficiency goals and prepare them for life after high school. Expanded learning provides more time and in-depth learning opportunities for students in the areas of math, science, literacy, and other core subjects to support academic excel-

lence. More time also enables schools to expand the curriculum and integrate or maintain important enrichment activities in the school day and year, avoiding the crowding out of engaging programming such as art, music, sports, and drama. Together, greater attention to academics and enrichment can help to produce 21st century knowledge workers with technology, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and team-building skills—all skills necessary for life-long success in a global society.

Time as a Catalyst: Lengthening the school day, school week and/or school year for any significant amount of time requires leaders to rethink school reform in a way that is not incremental. Redesigning a school's structure to integrate additional learning time requires innovation and retooling from the ground up. It demands thoughtful consideration of all aspects of school-wide improvement such as curriculum development, teacher training and collaboration, and budgeting, as well as the technical components of large-scale reform such as transportation, program evaluation, and teacher contract negotiations. This school-improvement strategy allows community, school, and district leaders to put incrementalism aside in favor of comprehensive reform.

Time as a Unifier: Transforming the components of school redesign into a successful strategy necessitates the meaningful involvement of parents, teachers, and communities at-large throughout planning and implementation. Because expanded learning time is not an incremental strategy, outreach and inclusion of these actors in decision-making and design are central to the effort's success. As with most successful school reform initiatives, empowering and giving ownership to parents, teachers, and other

valuable community members pays off. The process of expanding learning time therefore serves to unite these actors, giving them a role in the fundamental changes of their schools.

Time as a Preference: Student and school needs vary from community to community. Because there is no single reform strategy to improve student or school performance, multiple options must be available to families. Schools that expand learning time can broaden the choice options available. Presenting families with educational options for their children empowers them to choose the type of educational experiences and settings they feel will best meet the needs of their children. Although not a strategy for all students and schools, expanded learning time can be successful in many locations, such as larger school districts that may have greater capacity or access to other choice options.

How Has Time Historically Been Used?

The pursuit of challenging, extensive learning opportunities for students today is not unlike the ways in which privileged children have historically excelled. Boarding schools, study abroad, and the most rigorous academic and college preparation programs made different use of learning time, often by expanding it.

Today, many students are seeking additional opportunities to increase their academic growth and chances for success; they are taking advantage of extra academic opportunities during the traditional and non-traditional school hours. In doing so, these students use academic resources, particularly time, in different ways.

An increasingly common phenomenon is advanced students enrolling in summer school, after-school, intersession programs, and virtual learning courses to get a leg up on their academic progress. To hone their academic skills and increase their chances for acceptance into college, for example, students are attending summer classes to meet basic high school course requirements in order to take Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses during the school year. Once considered prime time for remediation, these non-traditional learning blocks are becoming pre-requisites for high achievers.

These strategies, which have worked for so many privileged and academically advanced students, should not just be considered options for the elite. The lessons learned from alternative, innovative learning strategies that make more and better use of time are ripe for study and replication, particularly for struggling students and continually low-performing schools and districts, many of which lack access to expanded learning opportunities.

What are the Benefits of More Time?

Initiatives that expanded learning time have facilitated school and classroom innovation to enhance teaching and learning. Through the expansion of learning time, teachers, for example, can provide students with more one-on-one instruction, teach in longer blocks to emphasize subject content, help students develop portfolios of their work, or utilize hands-on learning activities such as science labs and projects to help facilitate learning through application. The presence of more in-school time coupled with new and effective instruc-

tional strategies can have great impact on student performance. Incorporating additional time into the school experience also helps to address the individual needs of students by providing them with extra supports such as working with specialists and by encouraging participation in engaging activities of interest.

But the benefits of expanded learning time reach beyond improvements in student academic performance, their personal development, and preparation for adulthood. Expanding time also serves teachers well by providing them with more time to engage in high-quality professional development, participate in support activities such as mentoring, plan and work collaboratively with others, and analyze data to improve instruction and student achievement. Providing substantial quality professional development opportunities for teachers results in higher quality education for students.

Schools, too, gain from the expansion of learning time by allowing community-based partnerships to play a critical role in the implementation and strengthening of educational curriculum. Community-based partnerships not only offer enrichment programming for students but also carve time out of the academic calendar for teachers to participate in training and planning activities. For instance, if there are seven learning periods in the school day, one of them may be led by a community partner such as the Boys & Girls Club or a community college. Or a local organization or institution such as a hospital or museum may teach a monthly class at their facility, providing students with an enriched learning opportunity outside of the school walls. These partner-led classes, in turn, free up teachers to participate in profes-

sional development or common planning activities while other skilled adults are working with students.

Beyond school boundaries, employers and post-secondary educational institutions also recognize the influence that additional learning time can have on workplace and college readiness. Both are looking for individuals with solid academic preparation as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The business community in particular has been very vocal about their increasing need for 21st century knowledge workers. They caution that without significant school reform, businesses will be challenged even more than they are today to find skilled workers.

Parents and communities are also enthusiastic about the expansion of learning time and the ability for schools to focus on core academic content while engaging students in enrichment activities both inside and outside of schools. A longer school day or year provides children with a safe, supervised, and rich environment for a greater number of hours while parents are working.

While some efforts to expand learning time have been met with a degree of parental opposition, the Massachusetts

Teachers Group Embraces Expanded Learning Time

In a July 12th announcement, the American Federation of Teachers' president, Edward J. McElroy, called for the expansion of learning time from kindergarten through the third grade for the most vulnerable students. To combat summer learning loss, the AFT is proposing to add at least 20 days to the end of the school year to focus on "intensive instruction and enriching out-of-classroom activities" for these students.³

experience reveals three important lessons. First, the more parents know about the benefits of additional learning time, the more in favor they are of the strategy. Second, lower-income parents who want their children to have the same academic and enrichment experiences as their more affluent peers are particularly in support of more learning time. And lastly, opposition to expanded learning time tends to come from a vocal minority of mostly middle-income parents who are able to provide individually tailored opportunities for their children like music lessons, horseback riding, or drama lessons.

Even students themselves seem to be open-minded to a longer school day, week, or year. Schools that have implemented greater learning time into the school calendar recognize that there is an adjustment period for students. School leaders, however, are finding that students, particularly those in elementary school, quickly adjust. An engaging curriculum and enrichment activities that interest students help to overcome the challenges in transitioning to additional learning time. When successful, reengaged students are more likely to stay in school and graduate.

What Role Does Research Play in Supporting Expanded Learning Time?

Admittedly, there is not a large body of research supporting the expansion of learning time. However, the concept of expanding learning time draws on decades of research on time and learning and whether and how time impacts student outcomes. This research, begun in 1963 with the work of educational psychologist John Carroll, concludes that instructional time is a determinant of

academic outcomes and students achieve maximal learning when time spent learning matches time needed to learn.⁴ Additional research that contributes to the movement to expand learning time focuses on enrichment opportunities such as after-school programs. This research finds that participation in non-core academic activities raises engagement and academic outcomes.

The modern conceptualization of time and learning is captured by what is known as the Academic Learning Time, or ALT, model. Developed out of research conducted by David Berliner⁵ and Charles Fisher⁶ of Arizona State University, this model goes beyond the basic construct of time in an academic setting to address how time should be used in such a setting. In other words, academic learning time considers the quantity and quality of learning time, the level of student engagement, and measures of success or outcomes.

Further research on time and learning reveals that children lose some of what they've learned during the summer months in what is known as summer learning loss or the "summer slide." For many low-income children who lack engaging and enriching experiences during their time off, they can lose as much as two months of learning.⁷

While much academic and scientific research exists on time and learning, brain development and cognitive abilities, and enrichment, it has yet to be directly linked to the concept of expanded learning time in school—although researchers and advocates are in the midst of developing a research agenda and design to directly study the impact of a longer school day, week, or year on academic achievement.

As the result of this lack of direct research, proponents of expanded learning time tend to rely on evidence from the schools and districts that have successfully implemented more time into the school calendar. The discussion below addresses the evidence and highlights four model expanded learning time programs.

Over the years, research has shown that poor and minority children tend to begin school at an academic deficit compared to their higher-income and white peers. Research also documents that students who start school behind academically are likely to stay behind. The reality is that too many disadvantaged children lack high-quality educational experiences and access to engaging, enriching programs during traditional school time, the after-school hours, and summer months, and consequently never catch up.

Unfortunately, too many schools have responded to this challenge by narrowing the curriculum in order to place greater emphasis on core subjects such as reading and math. Cognitive researchers, however, caution that this does greater harm than good by removing students from learning experiences that can actually help them gain broader knowledge and context to better understand what they are learning.⁸ Additional learning time used well can make school for these students about catching up and accelerating.

Are There Model Expanded Learning Time Programs?

The success of extended learning time is evident in a number of model programs. Several charter and public schools have implemented expanded learning time initiatives over a number of years, as have

educational management organizations like New York-based Edison Schools that operate numerous schools for local school districts. Charter schools, however, appear to be the leading force in the movement to increase learning time and expand educational opportunities—perhaps because they have greater flexibility than public schools to develop and implement new programs. The Center for Education Reform conducted a national survey in 2005 of charter schools and found that 57 percent of respondents expand learning time: 13 percent expand the school day and year, 24 percent expand the school day, and 20 percent expand the school year.⁹

But public schools are also embracing expanded learning time. School-based efforts to increase learning time have recently started to dot the country in growing numbers. Because these efforts are new, data may not yet reveal improvements in student achievement or result in schools making adequate yearly progress as required by the 2002 federal No Child Left Behind Act. Nonetheless, these schools should be carefully supported and their impact on student and school success documented.

Additional evidence of the growing popularity of expanded learning initiatives comes from media reports. Investigation of chronically low- or under-performing schools that are now showing signs of improvement often reveal the use of more learning time. For example, according to the Council of Great City Schools, the membership organization for leaders of the nation's largest school districts, several high-performing urban schools have implemented extended time programs and are seeing positive results (see box on page 8).

One of the most high-profile efforts is taking place in the state of Massachusetts. In 2005, it became the first state to undertake a state-wide effort to implement expanded learning time in multiple schools. Made possible by the appropriation of new state dollars, this effort is currently in place in 10 schools in five districts, with continued funds to grow the number of schools to 19 beginning in Fall 2007 (additional schools are also in the planning pipeline). New York City and school districts in Florida, California, and Pennsylvania have successfully implemented expanded learning time initiatives as well. Several other model programs in both schools and districts across the country that serve a variety of students will be profiled in an upcoming report by the Center for American Progress.

Although the search for schools that have successfully implemented greater learning time into the school calendar beyond the well-known KIPP Academies or Massachusetts school efforts, for example, is intensive, the practice of expanding time in schools is likely more widely used than known. In fact, there are several model expanded learning time programs, four of which are presented here.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, School Improvement Zone

In 2004, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Rudy Crew created the School Improvement Zone to help many of the district's most under-performing schools. He sought to improve student and school performance and remedy the low performance feeder patterns between primary and secondary schools in the district. To do so, he established criteria to identify the schools for inclusion in the School Improvement Zone. Selected schools had at least a three-year history of low performance, were high-poverty schools, were part of the district's low performance feeder patterns, and had strong school leadership.

The School Improvement Zone includes 39 schools: 20 elementary, 11 middle, and 8 high schools. Partial implementation of the Zone began with the 2004–2005 school year, with full-scale implementation the following year. Enrolling more than 43,000 students, the Zone's schools serve a student population that is 66 percent African American, 30 percent Hispanic,

No Child Left Behind and Extended Learning Time

Thirty-six cities responded to the Council of Great City Schools survey on the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, with data from the 2002–2003 school year through the 2005–2006 school year. According to the survey, 458 schools in the urban districts responding are in the NCLB category of corrective action, which entails failing to make adequate yearly progress for five years. Another 449 schools are in restructuring,

which means they failed to make adequate yearly progress for six years.¹⁰

Of those schools in corrective action, nine districts have schools with an expanded school day and four have schools with an expanded school year. Of those in restructuring, seven districts have schools with an expanded school day and two districts have schools with an expanded school year.

78 percent low-income, and 17 percent English-language learners.¹¹

Schools in the School Improvement Zone expand the school day by one hour and lengthen the school year by two weeks. With a focus on literacy, the School Improvement Zone aims to enhance student comprehension and critical thinking skills while also focusing on mathematics. In addition, the School Improvement Zone emphasizes character development and enables students to participate in enrichment classes in what is known as the Academic Improvement Period.

Professional development is a major component of the School Improvement Zone and is offered to all teachers and staff. Professional development teams help to: guide reading, math and science instruction; analyze student-level data; provide content area support; and help teachers build learning communities.¹² Teachers in the Zone are compensated for their extra time, receiving a 20 percent increase in pay.

While there have been gains in academic achievement, they are larger in elementary schools than middle and high schools. When the School Improvement Zone first began, there were nine schools ranked “F” and no schools ranked “A” under the Florida school grading system. Now there are three “F” schools and two “A” schools. Results also show other positive outcomes, such as increased attendance, decreased suspensions, increased parental involvement, and school improvement.

Fairfax County Public Schools

In 1997, Daniel Domenech became Superintendent of Fairfax County Public

Schools in Northern Virginia. One of the first things he did in his new capacity was to identify the county’s lowest performing schools and develop a strategy to turn them around. A significant part of the strategy for the 20 elementary schools identified was to expand learning time and focus on literacy.

Fairfax County Public Schools did so by first instituting full-day kindergarten and making Monday a full school day for all grades (originally they were half days to allow for teacher professional development). Making Monday a full instructional day did not interrupt professional development as the Superintendent worked professional training and development opportunities into the expanded school calendar.

Domenech then implemented an optional year-round school calendar that ran from August to the end of June to combat summer learning loss. To move to this schedule, the school community had to show overwhelming support of the idea through a parent vote. Those who did not support a modified school calendar had the choice to opt out, although very few did so. The year-round schedule allows for nine weeks in school followed by three weeks off. During these intersession breaks, additional learning opportunities are available to students on a voluntary basis.

Participation in intersession programs is approximately 70 percent. Currently, there are five Fairfax County Public Schools with a year-round calendar.

With the clear purpose of closing achievement gaps and improving school performance, Domenech sought to increase learning time across the whole school year.

To do so, he had to make tough financial decisions and reallocate money to internally finance the expansion of learning time. Teachers in the schools with a modified calendar receive a 7.5 percent salary increase to compensate them for the additional 15 percent of time worked. Domenech's efforts to assist the district's low-performing schools continue today and have resulted in academic achievement gains over the years.

An Achievable Dream Academy

An Achievable Dream Academy in Newport News, Virginia, is a unique kindergarten through eighth grade public school that has successfully implemented expanded learning time and closed the academic achievement gaps with schools with more advantaged students. The school, created 12 years ago, grew out of an after-school tennis and tutoring program for local students. Well supported, it soon became an expanded learning school for the community's most underserved students. The school was developed through a partnership with the school district and the city of Newport News. It operates under the guidelines of the school district but is given additional flexibility that is traditionally afforded to charter schools.

Led by Director Richard Coleman, Sr., An Achievable Dream is a year-round school with four nine-week sessions followed by three weeks of break. Learning opportunities are available to students during the intersession breaks, two of which are mandatory. Students are tested during the nine-week session and the data is used to help teachers identify student's areas of need. These needs are then addressed during the intersessions.

In addition to a modified school calendar, the schedule expands the school day to eight and half hours. Half-day Saturday classes are available for students in the lowest quartile. The school currently enrolls almost 1,000 children. Ninety-nine percent of the students are African American, 96 percent qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and 75 percent are from single-parent homes.

Achievable Dream's mission is to promote social, academic, and moral education, known as S.A.M.E. To fulfill this mission, the school focuses on academic excellence and character development such as etiquette, conflict resolution, and healthy living. All students participate in tennis, in keeping with the history and tradition of the school. Students are taught reading and writing in 90-minute learning blocks that incorporate science and social studies. Students also participate in enrichment activities such as art, music, physical education, and computers and technology.

The school's program has received wide support from parents who understand the benefit of more time on student achievement. Parents are required to sign a contract to demonstrate their commitment and support of the school's S.A.M.E. mission. The school has also benefited from minimal teacher turnover. To be sure that teachers understand the demands of working in an expanded learning time school, the school's leaders clearly define what will be expected of them. To support the needs of these teachers, the school provides professional development and compensation for the additional time worked.

Achievable Dream expands learning time in a significant way. To do so, it receives funding from the city to compensate

teachers for the expanded time, as well as funds from local businesses, grants from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, and money from fundraisers. But the school's efforts have paid off. Achievable Dream has successfully closed the achievement gap, exceeded federal and state annual yearly progress requirements, and has been a model for two additional area elementary schools that have recently transitioned to an expanded day school.

Amistad Academy and Achievement First Schools

Amistad Academy is a public charter school serving students in New Haven, Connecticut in the fifth through eighth grades. Founded in 1999, Amistad Academy is a college preparatory school that lengthens the school day by one and one-half hours to focus on mathematics and English language arts. The school has a mandatory 15-day summer academy to focus on core academics, and offers before and after-school programming and tutoring. Encore!, Amistad's after-school enrichment program, provides students with daily instruction in theater, karate, dance, and web design, for example. The program has been so successful that it has inspired other efforts such as that of Gompers Charter Middle School in San Diego, CA.

Amistad's student population, which is selected through a lottery system, is about 64 percent low income, 63 percent African American, 35 percent Hispanic and 2 percent Caucasian. During the school's initial years, leaders were focused on closing the learning gap, securing high quality teachers, and creating a supportive learning environment for students. These efforts paid off as the school saw

its students make significant academic gains. Amistad students routinely score higher on state and national reading, writing, and math tests than many of their peers in wealthier school districts. In fact, Amistad has succeeded in closing the achievement gap of its students.

Amistad's success led to the creation and launch of Achievement First, a non-profit organization dedicated to sharing Amistad's secrets with other low-performing schools. Today, there are nine Achievement First schools in New Haven and Brooklyn, New York, serving students from kindergarten to 12th grade. Achievement First schools focus on both academics and character development. The core curriculum includes a daily three-hour reading block, additional time for math and writing each day, physical education or music, and history or science daily.

Teachers at Achievement First schools are assessed every six weeks and use the results to inform instruction. They also receive 13 days of professional development and work in collaboration with other teachers to provide strong learning opportunities to students. Teachers, parents, and students of Achievement First schools are required to sign a contract demonstrating their commitment to learning and student support.

What Have We Learned?

Clearly, school and district approaches to expanded learning time can vary in focus, structure, and content, among other things. Because expanded learning time is a choice and efforts to implement it are designed to meet the needs of specific students in particular schools, multiple

strategies to expand learning time should be embraced. Although there is no single expanded learning time model, there are similarities among efforts.

Successful expanded learning time initiatives share a set of fundamental principles. In-depth analysis of new and existing initiatives and consultation with the individuals that led such initiatives identifies five key characteristics or pillars of success:

support necessary for such change and as such serve as liaisons to all stakeholders. Engaging in continuous and meaningful public outreach is a critical component of leadership and necessary to support successful implementation.

Cases in point:

- Daniel Domenech, former Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, created a Plan for Excellence in 1998.

COMMONALITIES OF MODEL ELT PROGRAMS	
1. BOLD LEADERSHIP	A leader and leadership team needs to be fully committed to expanding learning time and capable of bringing many others into the process of redesign and improvement.
2. TEACHER PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP	Teachers need to be an integral part of the redesign, implementation, and the continuous improvement of the expanded learning time initiative.
3. USE OF DATA	Data needs to drive the planning and implementation of expanded learning time as well as the ongoing adjustment of instruction, curriculum, and use of time in order to meet goals for students.
4. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND PARTNERS	Community support and partnerships can assist schools in planning, implementation, staffing, and educational programming and bring new and perhaps vital resources to the school.
5. FOCUSED, ALIGNED USE OF TIME THAT ENGAGES STUDENTS	There must be a focus on core academics and enrichment that occurs in tandem with other reform strategies and practices.

Bold leadership

Visionary leadership is the foundation of any reform effort. To implement successful expanded learning strategies, school, district, and community leaders must be fully committed to moving in a new direction and fearless in taking a stand on the need for substantial change. Expanding learning time is a demanding strategy that requires careful planning before implementation. Leaders must therefore engage intensively in program design and clearly articulate the goals and expectations of the strategy. They must build and maintain the political will and

Part of the plan outlined a strategy to improve the district’s lowest-performing schools by expanding learning time. Understanding that principal leadership was necessary to successfully implement more time on task, he developed support among school leaders. He then made the tough decisions that enabled him to financially support the expansion of learning time in 20 of the district’s schools. His perseverance led to structural changes that still exist today to combat learning gaps.

- The founders of Amistad Academy visited successful schools around the

nation to learn their secrets in order to apply them to a school improvement strategy to close achievement gaps. These visionary leaders then created Achievement First, a non-profit organization, to replicate the Academy in other low-performing schools in Connecticut and New York.

Teacher participation and leadership

Highly effective teachers delivering a rigorous curriculum in the classrooms of schools with extra time are a fundamental element of this strategy's success. Teachers in schools with more time should want to be there, be highly motivated, be dedicated to the school's mission and goals, and be well-trained. Teachers are leaders in the classroom and at school; they must be highly invested in student learning and school success. Because teacher support is critical to school success, they must play a vital role in the redesign process and reach consensus with school leaders about the vision for school improvement.

Cases in point:

- An Achievable Dream Academy places great importance on teacher-student relationships and the need for teachers to understand the needs of their students. As such, the school plays a proactive role in conveying to teachers and potential teachers what is required of them to work in a year-round, expanded learning time school. During the interview and hiring process, administrators determine a teacher's passion for their work, gauge their understanding of the challenges they will have to undertake, and make sure

that teachers understand what it takes to make and keep a high-performing school successful.

- The Massachusetts effort to expand learning time reflects the various ways in which teacher contracts can be constructed to support the needs of teachers in schools with expanded learning time. One school that extends the day by two hours requires all teachers to teach for the first of these two hours. The second hour is optional because community partners are brought in to lead activities. In a second school, teachers received a 30 percent increase in their salaries and were offered the option to transfer out of the school if they didn't want to extend their work day. A third school allowed existing teachers to opt out, but required new teachers or incoming teachers to teach for the additional time.

Use of data

The use of data in expanded learning time efforts serves multiple functions. In the beginning, student-level data must be analyzed to inform leaders about the academic needs of students in the school. Doing so will demonstrate that schools and districts understand the needs of their students and are therefore designing a strategy of interventions around those students' needs. Assessment, portfolio, and other types of student performance data can also be used to influence student instruction and teaching methods, track academic growth over time, and connect students to teachers. Collecting and maintaining student, teacher, and school-level data also serves as educational research and development; it can provide researchers and education advocates with

valuable information on the effect of systemic reform by linking educational strategies and inputs to student outcomes.

Case in point:

- Miami-Dade County Public Schools relied on school-level data to assess which schools were the lowest-performing and contributing to a low performance feeder pattern between elementary, middle and high schools. Based on this data, 39 schools were selected for inclusion in the School Improvement Zone: 20 elementary schools, 11 junior highs, and eight high schools. After three years of implementation, the Zone continues to use student- and school-level data to guide its intervention efforts and document its impact.

Community support and partnerships

Successful school reform efforts are those embraced by most stakeholders especially parents. Visionary leaders, and schools themselves, can't achieve reform on their own efforts alone. To sustain viable expanded learning time initiatives, they need broad-based community support and long-term commitment from partners. Actively involving communities in the design of the expanded school calendar will pay off with great dividends. Strategies that establish a balance between community outreach and involvement and the technical dimensions of program design are typically the most successful.

Case in point:

- Massachusetts 2020, the leading organization in the promotion of the state's effort to expand learning time,

invested two years in the planning of this effort. In doing so, they conducted surveys to gauge public sentiment and support for education reform and the expanded learning time strategy, and embarked on a public education campaign aimed at parents and other members of the community. They also worked closely with teachers and the teacher unions—early on—and invested great care in helping to negotiate teacher contracts, when an objective voice was needed. In addition, the organization played a key role in securing community-based partners to work with schools that expanded their learning time.

Focused, aligned use of time that engages students

At their core, schools that expand learning time must be focused and purposeful about how they do it. This focus begins with intentional choices about how to use time in ways that align with the school's goals and curriculum. Schools that expand learning time do not simply add enrichment courses such as art, music, or drama. Instead, they choose to offer courses that align academic content with enrichment programming and connect to student needs and interests. How these schools use expanded learning time must also align with state standards and appropriately relate to a state's school improvement plan. Such careful creation of a school's curriculum and use of learning time, and its flexibility to develop appropriately tailored interventions that will have lasting value for each student, is what makes expanded learning time a promising strategy that is far from "more of the same." Some expanded learning time schools have chosen to focus on be-

ing college preparatory institutions, while others focus on technology and science or communication and the arts.

Case in point:

- Miami's School Improvement Zone emphasizes literacy and enhancing student comprehension and critical thinking. The early elementary grades therefore focus on reading and writing skills. Later elementary and middle school grades participate in a Transition Academy, which expands the literacy focus and combines it with graduation and career preparation, character development, and study skills. Students in the later grades also participate in one-on-one tutoring if needed.

In addition to these five pillars, successful expanded learning time initiatives also create a strong school culture to foster student learning. Development of the school's culture occurs organically through the redesign process which induces consideration by leaders of every

aspect of schooling including the school's mission and goals—two primary components of institutional culture. As such, expanded learning initiatives are intentionally driven and applied. Successful initiatives provide students with a structured and supportive atmosphere to nurture learning. Such initiatives relate and connect to student needs and interests, are engaging and of high quality, include structured student and adult interactions, and maintain high expectations for student learning. Another component impacting school culture is parental engagement or involvement. Many schools with increased time ask parents to volunteer or sign contracts committing them to participate in their child's education through various activities like nightly reading logs.

As schools and districts explore the expansion of learning time, these five components should be thoughtfully considered and carefully incorporated into both planning and implementation efforts. Each one of them, however, involves more than just a slogan and brief definition.

Conclusion

More and better use of learning time benefits *all* children, especially those who are academically behind and too often from low-income and minority families. Without comprehensive, school-wide reform, the challenge of getting under-performing students to grade level and beyond—while maintaining a rich, full curriculum—will remain difficult. Putting these students on a path to success will require nothing less than the best—the best teachers, the best principals, the best curriculum, the most time, the best supports, and the social security that accompanies a positive, strong learning environment. Well-implemented expanded learning time initiatives can provide all students in a school with the time, instruction, and structures necessary to achieve academic success and other positive outcomes.

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Endnotes

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