



Expanded Learning Time by the Numbers

The Traditional School Calendar Is Failing to Meet Many Students' Needs

Expanding learning time, or ELT, in schools is a core strategy on the national education reform agenda as policymakers and educators recognize that the standard school calendar does not fit many students' needs. Most U.S. students attend school for an average of 6.5 hours a day, for 180 days a year. This is not nearly enough time for many students, particularly those who are English language learners and those who start the school year learning below their grade level.

Some schools serving large concentrations of low-income and minority students have dramatically improved student achievement by increasing instructional time in the form of a longer school day, week, or year for all students. Schools that expand learning time formally incorporate traditional out-of-school activities such as the arts and service opportunities into the official school calendar so all students, including those living in the highest poverty, have access to them.

ELT schools allow community-based organizations such as arts and cultural institutions to take on more collaborative roles within the school than is typically the case in a conventional school calendar. It is not uncommon in ELT schools for these organizations to co-teach classes with regular classroom teachers and provide professional development for teachers, and mental and physical health services to students. And they play a key role in the governance, funding, policy development, and pedagogical practice of the school.

ELT schools bring important resources into the classroom and recognize that it's not just more, but also better, classroom learning time that is the key to student success. Take a look for yourself:

Expanded learning time basics

655: The number of expanded learning time schools in 36 states, more than a quarter of which are standard district public schools.

300: The recommended minimum number of additional hours that schools should add to their school calendar to provide students more learning time and opportunities for enrichment activities.

6 to 20 percent: The increase in a school's budget, depending on the staffing model, to expand learning time for students by 30 percent.

90 percent: The proportion of ELT schools that considered their longer day or year to be essential in meeting their educational goals in a survey of nearly 250 ELT schools.

20 percent: The increase in annual classroom hours that experienced teachers say they need to effectively teach the four core academic subjects—English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

Other countries are racing ahead in education

197: The average number of days that a middle school teacher in Finland, Japan, and Korea spends on instruction per year compared to the 180 days in the United States.

10,000: The number of hours researchers estimate that students need to achieve expertise. There are approximately 800 annual instructional hours a year in U.S. schools, which means it would take 12.5 years for students to participate in 10,000 hours of schooling, given no loss of learning during the summer.

Students at low-income schools are being left behind

3,000: The average number of words in a low-income kindergartener's vocabulary compared to the 20,000 in a middle-class kindergartener's vocabulary.

Sixth or seventh: The grade at which approximately half of ninth graders at high-poverty schools are reading when they enter high school.

32 million: The size of the gap in word exposure between children in professional families (45 million words) and welfare families (13 million) that has accumulated by age 4. Children in professional families will have heard almost as many words by age 1 (11.2 million) as children in welfare families have heard by age 4 (13 million).

1.67: The average minutes per day that third, fourth, and fifth graders in high-poverty schools received explicit vocabulary instruction, or about 100 seconds.

Four: The maximum number of minutes per day teachers in low-income schools spent engaging their first-grade students with informational texts rich in academic language and content-area vocabulary, often because these resources were unavailable.

English language learners achieve when given more time

5 million: The number of ELLs in grades Pre-K through 12—more than 10 percent of total public school enrollment. They are concentrated in urban and predominantly minority and low-income districts, and 80 percent are native Spanish speakers.

5,000: The number of more words native English speaking kindergarteners have in their vocabulary compared to English language learners.

71 and 74 percent: The portion of English language learners in fourth and eighth grade, respectively, who scored below basic in their reading ability as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2009.

25 to 30 percent: The portion of ELLs in New York who graduate within four years of entering high school, compared to 71 percent of non-ELLs.

38 to 44 percent: The portion of ELLs in New York who graduate from high school when they receive an additional one to two years of schooling.

74 percent: The portion of ELLs in New York who graduate from high school when they are able to attain English language proficiency and exit the limited English proficient category—higher than the non-ELL rate of 71 percent. These are the type of outcomes that might be expected if ELLs had more learning time.

40: The number of states plus the District of Columbia that report using pull-out English language instruction in addition to other English language development strategies. Pull-out programs result in less content exposure for ELLs because they take ELL students out of the classroom for an average of 30 to 45 minutes per day, which means fewer opportunities and time for ELLs to obtain core academic content, making it difficult for them to keep pace with their native English peers.

Massachusetts's ELT program shows early success

22: The number of ELT schools across 12 districts in Massachusetts—where ELT is a publicly funded, statewide initiative—that have expanded their school calendar by at least 25 percent.

12,000: The number of students in the state who now attend school for almost eight hours every day.

70 percent: The portion of the student body at Massachusetts's ELT schools that is low income, compared to 30.7 percent across the state.

\$1,300: The annual Massachusetts ELT per pupil allocation, which has not changed since the program began in 2005, despite advocacy by ELT leaders for an increase to cover the rising costs of teacher salaries and community partnerships. This additional funding per pupil increases enrichment opportunities and adds more time for teacher preparation and professional development.

72 percent: The proportion of ELT teachers in Massachusetts who feel they are significantly involved in making decisions for the school, compared to 59 percent for non-ELT teachers. They are also more likely to share and discuss instructional strategies with other teachers (87 percent compared to 74 percent), and have sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues (57 percent compared to 40 percent) across Massachusetts.

4.9 percent: The change in the portion of students in Massachusetts ELT schools achieving proficiency in English language arts from 2008 to 2009, compared to the 2.6 percent change across the state.

4.8 percent: The change in the portion of students in Massachusetts ELT schools achieving proficiency in science from 2008 to 2009 compared to the 1 percent change across the state.