

More Time for Learning: ELT Initiatives & Enrichment Opportunities

A decade of research and evaluation demonstrates that quality after-school and summer programs support the healthy development and academic success of children and youth. As schools across the nation struggle to meet federal benchmarks for adequate yearly progress and keep students on track to graduate from high school, the need for serious education reform has become increasingly apparent. Schools alone can't do the work of engaging kids in learning and preparing them for jobs in an increasingly creative, competitive 21st century economy.

As policymakers at the national and state levels increasingly experiment with school reform initiatives to lengthen the school day or year, the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS) has begun to explore the potential of Expanded Learning Time (ELT) as an opportunity to strengthen connections between school and after-school systems.

Formed in 2006, CBASS is a partnership among the leaders of local after-school

intermediaries in seven jurisdictions, who seek to improve outcomes for youth by helping to promote and expand after-school systems through policy change. The CBASS partner organizations are: Baltimore's After School Strategy and The After-School Institute, Boston After School & Beyond, Chicago's After School Matters, DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc., Providence After School Alliance, Inc., and The After-School Corporation in New York City.

CBASS partners believe that after-school and summer programs have an essential role to play in supporting children and youth and should be integrated into broader education reform efforts. This brief describes some ELT initiatives already underway; examines the differences between ELT and traditional after-school; and recommends that ELT and after-school proponents work together to develop policy recommendations that incorporate the best elements of both approaches from the perspective of children and families.

THE COLLABORATIVE
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The Emergence of ELT

Recent interest by policymakers in ELT initiatives has been spurred by stagnant test score gains and the loss of enrichment activities during the regular school day. Many ELT initiatives are being planned to operate in the same time and space as traditional after-school and summer programs.

ELT is a school reform strategy that lengthens the traditional school day or year in order to increase student learning opportunities. Initiatives are based on the theory that if students are expected to learn more, they must have more time to reach those expectations.^{1,2} In many communities, the initiatives are being planned to operate in the same time and space as traditional after-school and summer programs.

Recent interest by state and school officials in a longer school day has been spurred in part by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), both as an answer to stagnant standardized test score gains and a way to re-incorporate enrichment activities into the school day.^{3,4} According to the National Center on Time & Learning, many ELT models take inspiration from charter schools, with nearly one-third of the nation's 4,100 charter schools offering a longer school day or year than traditional schools. Most cities and states are focusing ELT initiatives on schools that are chronically low-performing, with the number of ELT initiatives across the country growing:

- New Mexico is spending \$7.1 million to add 25 extra days to reach 7,000 k-3 students in high need schools. It is also spending \$2.1 million to extend the day by one hour for 2,100 failing students.
- The Recovery School District of New Orleans, LA, instituted extended day programs in its schools, with the goal of adding 120 additional hours of instructional time to the schedule of about 4,000 students, roughly one-third of the District's enrollment. School superintendent Paul Vallas is discussing an extended year for 2008-2009.
- Individual districts in Portland, OR, Seattle, WA, Miami-Dade, FL, West Fresno, CA, and Pittsburgh, PA have added hours to school schedules.⁵
- Connecticut is proposing a longer day as part of a \$1 billion increase in education spending.
- Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sandy Garrett has called for an extended day plan that proposes one additional hour and five additional days to the current school schedule.
- Lawmakers in Minnesota, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Utah and Washington are considering ELT proposals.

The ELT movement has gained important allies in philanthropy and Capitol Hill.

- Bill Gates and Eli Broad have made ELT a key element in their education reform agenda for the upcoming presidential election.⁶
- The Broad Foundation has helped establish the National Center on Time & Learning, formed this past fall to promote ELT.
- New Hampshire has received a \$1 million grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to create ELT programs at four high schools,

allowing approximately 400 students to earn credit towards high school completion in 2008-2009.⁷

- Senator Kennedy (D-MA) has introduced legislation as part of NCLB reauthorization to recruit and train 10,000 teaching fellows to help coordinate and support ELT, 21st Century Community Learning Center, and after-school programs in “high need schools”⁸. Senator Kennedy is also working with Representative Miller (D-CA) to include a pilot to expand learning time in the NCLB reauthorization.

ELT in CBASS Cities

CHICAGO

Mayor Richard M. Daley has said a longer school day is a priority, noting that students in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) spend the equivalent of 40 fewer days in the classroom than students in New York City over the course of the current school year.^{9,10}

Chicago is embracing an enrichment/youth development oriented after-school model as part of its school reform strategy:

- The Chicago Public Schools Office of After School and Community School Programs, which supports seven after-school initiatives on a budget of \$80 million and serves 200,000 students, was renamed the Office of Extended Learning Opportunities.¹¹
- Arne Duncan, the CEO of CPS, recently supported the notion that that all 25 High School

Transformation project schools, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, should include after-school programs, suggesting that after-school programs definitely contribute to students success and that the programs are critical to transforming the overall high school environment.

CPS Chief Education Officer Barbara Eason-Watkins indicated that CPS will embrace the lessons of after-school in extended day programming: “Clearly, many of our students still need to have additional time to focus on the basics-reading and mathematics. But beyond that, it’s critical that our children have opportunities such as the robotics program that was part of our summer school. We need to make sure that our children have a variety of enrichment opportunities.”¹²

NEW YORK

In 2005, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) negotiated a new teacher contract which requires them to work an additional 150 minutes per week to provide tutoring and small group instruction. In 2007, New York City schools received \$258 million in new state aid that must be spent on five approved school reform programs, including increased student time on task. New York City Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein has announced that \$48 million of the new state aid will be directed to time on task initiatives and extended day instruction.¹³

In other parts of New York State, school districts are also using new state aid to pay for ELT initiatives. The Buffalo Public School District is targeting 16 schools serving nearly 10,000 students with \$6.7 million to extend the school day by one hour and the year by an additional 20 days for summer instruction.¹⁴ The Rochester School District is using \$4.8 million in new funding for extended school day and year programs for 7,000 students in grades 1-8. The Schenectady School District plans to extend school day programs by one hour in all schools for all kids (if they elect to participate).¹⁵

The After-School Corporation (TASC), in partnership with the New York City DOE, and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development is launching a three-year demonstration program called Expanded Learning Time/New York City or ELT/NYC. The pilot will increase student learning time by at least 30% at 13 NYC public elementary and middle schools, cost about \$1,600 per student and require more rigorous academic enrichment as well as CBO participation.

WASHINGTON, DC

In January 2008, DC Mayor Adrian Fenty and new DC

In Boston, New York, and Washington, DC, significant ELT experiments are underway, with a growing number of public schools adding hours or days to the traditional schedule. In Baltimore, Chicago, Palm Beach County and Providence, RI, policymakers have expressed support for ELT initiatives but face barriers to adding more school time, including costs and teacher's union opposition. All CBASS jurisdictions have strong OST systems in place.

Public Schools (DCPS) Chancellor Michelle L. Rhee announced the launch of a new Saturday Scholars program: 7,500 students in grades 3-6 from 91 schools will be asked to attend in the 14-week program to boost reading and math test scores.

The Mayor has supported the idea of piloting year-round classes in failing DC Public Schools.¹⁶ The DCPS Master Education Plan proposes to pilot extended-day programs in several high schools, to provide students with additional academic support from 3:30pm to 6:00pm each day.¹⁷ The most recent Washington Teachers Union contract established 13 innovation Pilot Schools, which will receive \$1 million to support experimentation with extended day and school year schedules.

PROVIDENCE AND BALTIMORE

Leaders in Providence, RI, and Baltimore, MD, have yet to undertake significant ELT initiatives. In 2007, The Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance received one of six state grants from the National Conference of State Legislatures in partnership with the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to develop and implement state policies that integrate expanded learning opportunities into the state education system.

The Massachusetts ELT initiative is the largest in the nation, using \$13 million in state funding to extend learning time by 30% or more at 18 schools serving 9,000 students. An additional 67 schools have received planning grants to implement ELT over the next two years.

In 2004, The Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education extended the instructional school day to a minimum of 5.5 hours, which resulted in a new deal with the Providence Teachers Union to add 10 more minutes of high school class time and 15 minutes more of elementary school class time.¹⁸

A 2007 effort by the Baltimore Public School System to extend the school day by 20 minutes was rejected by the Baltimore Teacher's Union.¹⁹

BOSTON

Currently, four of the eighteen schools in the Massachusetts ELT initiative are located in Boston (see next page). In addition, Mayor Thomas Menino helped form the "Step UP" initiative in 2006, a partnership between 10 Boston Public Schools and five local universities that included extended day programs²⁰ and has argued for linking "schools and extended day goals and outcomes".²¹ Boston is piloting ELT amongst a larger portfolio of co-existing strategies that work to expand school-based learning opportunities and supports for children and youth (Partners for Student Success, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the United Way Out of Harm's Way program, and state Department of Education funded OST programs, and others).

PALM BEACH COUNTY

In 2006-2007, the School District of Palm Beach County provided School-Age Child Care (SACC) after-school programs for 16,000 students in 92 elementary schools and for 3,500 additional students in 35 middle schools. A full-time SACC program operates from 2pm to 6pm and a part-time SACC program operates from 2pm to 4pm. The School District of Palm Beach County also operated 13 Beacon Center schools that partnered with local community based organizations in a partnership with The Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County. The initiative offers students and families targeted supplemental supports, including after-school/evening programs, links to community resources, and extended hours of operation during weekends, school breaks, and summers. Services provided at the Beacon Centers are tailored to address the specific needs of the families in each identified community.

The Massachusetts ELT Initiative

In 2005, the Governor, the legislature, the Massachusetts Department of Education, and Massachusetts 2020, an advocacy and support organization that provides initiative leadership and technical assistance²², collaborated to launch the statewide ELT initiative. For the 2007-2008 school year, 18 schools serving more than 9,000 students received \$13 million in state ELT funding. Another 67 schools have received planning grants from the Massachusetts Department of Education to implement ELT over the next two years.²³

The Massachusetts ELT initiative is the largest to date:²⁴

- ELT is a strategy for school redesign that must add at least 30% of learning time over the school year and include a net gain in core academic and individualized instruction, enrichment, and professional development.
- Schools that serve a high-percentage of low-income families and have community partnerships are given priority for demonstration funds.
- Schools receive \$1,300 per student.
- The school district controls the ELT schedule and the budget.
- ELT activities in participating schools are required for all students.²⁵
- Individual schools decide the balance between academic and enrichment activities and whether to schedule enrichment activities throughout the day or at the end.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The first 10 schools to implement ELT were located in urban districts: among the districts that chose not to participate were those in middle class and suburban communities, in which parent opposition was strong and quality after-school and summer programs were already available.^{26,27} Eight of the 10 ELT schools for which information was available allocated two-thirds of the lengthened school day to core academic subjects and one-third to enrichment activities.²⁸

The \$1,300 per pupil cost is not always sufficient to cover costs of teacher time and community providers in delivering the lengthened school day; in many schools, community providers have had to secure their own funding.

Nevertheless, the first cohort of ELT schools made significant progress on improving academic achievement as measured by the state's standardized test scores. The percentage of students scoring at least proficient from the previous year grew 10.8 percentage points in English, 7.2 percentage points in math, and 4.7 percentage points in science, outpacing schools in the rest of the state.²⁹ The number of ELT schools reaching their target proficiency rate (i.e., those that made Adequate Yearly Progress) doubled in math and grew by 40% in English Language Arts.³⁰

Differences between ELT and Traditional After-School Programs

Current ELT initiatives differ from district to district and school to school with respect to: the amount of time added to the school day schedule, the unit cost per student, balance between academics and enrichment, time devoted to professional development and the role of community partnerships.

ELT is primarily an institutional strategy for school reform that includes more time on task; as opposed to the organized expansion of children's learning experiences.

Proponents of both ELT models and after-school and summer program models acknowledge the value of additional enrichment activities, alternative approaches to learning, and more time on task to support vulnerable children and youth. Many ELT initiatives are modeled after charter schools (such as KIPP and YES Prep Public Schools), which extend school hours beyond the conventional schedule³¹ and have had remarkable success in boosting achievement. Salient features of current ELT initiatives that distinguish them from traditional after-school programs include:

- In current ELT initiatives, the school district (or the school) has financial and programmatic control over non-traditional school hours (as opposed to shared control with community organizations).
- ELT is primarily an institutional strategy for school reform that includes more time on task; as opposed to the organized expansion of children's learning experiences.
- ELT programs incorporate funding and require additional time for professional development and teacher planning: Funding for professional development is not included in typical after-school program budgets and staffs often receive stipends for attending training sessions, scheduled before or after the after-school program, usually on the weekends.
- Since ELT is a school wide reform, student participation is mandatory.
- Most ELT schools end their longer day program at times likely to be incompatible with the daily schedules of working families.

Other models bridge some of the differences between current ELT and traditional after-school models. Community schools generally have community partners who may take the lead in governance.³² CBO led programming is often scheduled throughout the day as well as after-school. They have a strong emphasis on family involvement; and usually offer families ESL and other educational and social services. And while community schools regard all children as participants, student participation in after-school programming is not usually compulsory.

Moving Forward

Although the idea of expanding learning time has recently gained momentum among proponents of school reform, after-school advocates have consistently called for the expansion of learning and enrichment time for all kids, particularly those who are on the wrong side of the opportunity gap. High-quality after-school and summer programs have been helping kids achieve school success and healthy development beyond the school day bell for many years.

A decade of research and evaluation demonstrates that high-quality after-school programs have positive impacts on critical academic, developmental, and health outcomes.³³ A 2007 meta-analysis evaluating over 70 programs, by Joseph Durlak and Roger Weissberg, found clear evidence that after-school increases youths' school attendance, school grades, self-esteem, and positive social behaviors and reduces school conduct problems – all outcomes essential to supporting student success in school.³⁴ This evidence suggests that after-school stakeholders have important contributions to make to education reform efforts.

ELT, after-school, and summer program proponents share the same fundamental goal: to prepare America's children for a successful future by expanding their educational experiences beyond the traditional school schedule. All of these proponents also recognize the importance of enrichment activities, support multiple approaches to learning, and target supports to struggling students. The difference in approaches result from the fact that the goals of ELT are primarily academic and the strategy driven by the institutional needs of schools, while the goals of after-school and summer program proponents are more broadly developmental and the strategy grounded more in relationships than institutions.

The public discourse about the merits of both approaches has too often been parochial and self-serving. Proponents of ELT are more likely to address their arguments to state and federal elected officials, educators and advocates for school reform, and to use language that corresponds to their concerns. They speak about struggling students, school redesign, academic achievement and professional development. After-school and summer program providers are more likely to look for support among community leaders and local elected officials and to use the youth development language of changing the trajectory of disadvantaged kids. Given similar goals, it is time for ELT and after-school proponents to come together to examine both approaches from the perspective of children and families. Elements to be considered might include: community partnerships, support for working parents, staffing requirements and the need for educationally rigorous curriculum.

Therefore, CBASS partners call for a national convening of leaders from the fields of philanthropy, youth development, education, after-school and summer programs to discuss the opportunities and challenges of ELT school reform strategies and the potential benefits and drawbacks of ELT and traditional after-school models. The goal would be to produce policy recommendations which embrace the best elements of both approaches, and ensure that more time truly adds up to a better school day.

Footnotes

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- ⁸ "High-Need Schools" are defined as being eligible to receive title I funds and participating in an ELT initiative, 21st century community learning center program, or after-school program.
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- ²² Technical assistance included public policy research and advocacy, union-management negotiations, design of content and schedule, building partnerships with community organizations, and helping to resolve logistical challenges like transportation.
- ²³ Massachusetts 20/20. "Time for a New Day: Broadening Opportunities for Massachusetts Schoolchildren." Retrieved from: <http://www.mass2020.org/Final%20ELT%20Annual%20Report.pdf> February 25, 2008.
- ²⁴ Pennington, Hillary. "The Massachusetts Expanding Learning Time to Support Student Success Initiative". Center for American Progress. 2007. TASC. 30 May 2007 <<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/01/pdf/MALearningTime.pdf>>
- ²⁵ The rationale provided by Chris Gabrieli of Massachusetts 2020 for this requirement is if ELT initiatives in schools targeted only those students in academic trouble, "it would go from being perceived as a broad opportunity to a negative, almost like detention hall". (Ibid)
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The Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS) is a partnership of intermediary organizations dedicated to increasing the availability of quality after school programming by building citywide after-school systems. The mission of CBASS is to make after-school part of the system of essential services that support children and youth, and to promote the development of quality after-school service systems nationwide. CBASS was founded in 2006 with a grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies.

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