

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON EXTENDED LEARNING TIME IN K-12 SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

ECONORTHWEST'S 2008 WHITEPAPER *A Review of Research on Extended Learning Time in K-12 Schools* reviewed the then available literature about extended learning time (ELT) in kindergarten through twelfth grade. This update to the whitepaper describes more recent ELT research and expands on the recommendations originally presented.

ELT programs seek to improve educational outcomes through increased student contact time, although ELT implementation can vary significantly in the details. Efforts typically involve one of two main approaches: adding hours or days to the regular school schedule using existing staff and facilities, or implementing out-of-school programs (after-school or summer school) that are operated separately from the regular school day or year. But other options have been explored, such as improving the use of time within the existing school calendar, and adjusting the calendar to shorten long summer breaks.

The literature suggests that the likelihood of success with an ELT program relies on strong coordination with regular school programs; employment of highly qualified staff; support from involved families and the broader community; a focus on a narrow set of outcomes for high-risk students; and intensive, sustained participation by students.

1. ELT proponents generally propose implementing ELT as a means of improving academic achievement. Massachusetts 2020, a longtime supporter of ELT, cites five primary benefits that derive from adding time to the traditional school day:¹
2. More time on task;
3. Greater depth and breadth of learning;
4. More time for teacher planning and professional development;
5. More time for enrichment and experiential learning; and
6. Stronger relationships between teachers and students.

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However, some ELT skeptics argue that ELT resources should instead be redeployed to improving the quality of existing school time instead to increase classroom time. Others contend that the resources would provide more benefits if devoted to other programming already proven to be cost-effective in improving academic achievement, such as expanded early-childhood education opportunities and certain evidence-based programs for disadvantaged students.

Schools typically implement ELT at the same time as other reforms, such as professional development for teachers, mental and physical health services for students, and new instruction and academic enrichment content. In addition, schools use additional learning time in a variety of ways, with differences in focus, curricular content, and structure. While this flexibility allows the school to tailor the program to the specific needs of its student body, these features of ELT implementation can present significant analytical challenges to researchers seeking to generalize about the beneficial impacts of ELT.²

Evidence for the benefits of ELT

As described in the 2008 whitepaper, researchers generally find that children from low socio-economic backgrounds gain the most from ELT; that elementary and secondary students gain more from ELT programs than do middle school students; and that the effect of out-of-school learning time does not vary greatly depending on whether time is added to the regular school day or through additional school days during the summer.³

At present, ELT research remains largely quasi-experimental and anecdotal, but recent findings nonetheless continue to add support for the idea that ELT can improve student outcomes. The most compelling research has emerged from studies of charter schools implementing ELT, in part because most ELT efforts to date have been implemented at charter schools:

- A 2009 National Center on Time and Learning survey of 655 expanded-time schools found that three-quarters of expanded-time schools are charter schools existing outside of state or local regulations. A total of 300,000 students in 36 states and the District Columbia attended these schools, serving a large minority and poor student body. Almost half of the schools in the survey started an expanded time schedule within the last three years. The survey found a statistically significant correlation between total classroom time and student performance for grades seven and 10 in both math and English.⁴
- A recent analysis of student outcomes for applicants to all New York City charter schools between 2000 and 2008 also supports positive ELT impacts. The lottery-based evaluation compares achievement data of students admitted to charter schools against data from students who applied but were not admitted. The study found that a student who attended a charter school from kindergarten through eighth grade would, on average, close about 86 percent of the “Scarsdale-Harlem achievement gap” in math and 66 percent in English. When analyzing the factors that might contribute to the closing of the achievement gap, results found that the strongest predictor of positive achievement is the longer school year.⁵
- New York charter schools manage to have longer school years while operating on a smaller budget than most regular public schools. Money saving techniques include small administrative staffs, younger teaching staff and slightly larger class sizes. Expanding class size by a small number of students can free up a significant amount of budget.⁵ While not necessarily feasible in every case, innovative approaches to financing ELT is increasingly important as school budgets are unlikely to grow appreciable for the foreseeable future.

In parallel with these promising new research findings, ELT has recently come to the forefront of the national education reform agenda:

- President Barack Obama’s education speech in March 2009 acknowledged “the challenges

of a new century demand more time in the classroom”. The “Time for Innovation matters in Education Act” responded to the president’s call to action by supporting state initiatives that expand time by at least 300 hours for low-performing schools.

- The U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan called for innovative and comprehensive national education reform, including expanding school time for underperforming schools.
- The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act made increased learning time a key eligibility requirement of the School Improvement Grants.
- The U.S. Senate is currently discussing an increase in funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program by \$100 Million, and making program funds available for extended learning time and after-school programs.
- New federal funding opportunities require that schools use extended learning time. These opportunities include the ARRA “Race to the Top” fund, Investing in Innovation fund, and the School Improvement Grants.

During its 2009 session, the legislature passed Senate Bill 484. The bill set the stage for moving Oregon schools toward year-round classes and established a summer instruction pilot program that was implemented in the Salem-Keizer and Reynolds school districts. A draft bill that re-introduces elements of SB 484 with refinements that reflect findings from the Salem-Keizer and Reynolds pilot projects is under review for the 2011 session (see appendix).

Recommendations

ECONorthwest’s 2008 white paper recommended that Oregon school districts test the ELT model at carefully selected pilot school sites. These schools would devote the extended time to specific, proven interventions, including one-on-one tutoring of students at risk of reading failure or small group monitoring of students at risk of

dropping out of high school.

The recent ramping up of federal support for ELT programs makes this an opportune time for Oregon to increase experimentation with ELT. Recently available and prospective funding sources include:

- The \$4.35 billion allocated to the ARRA “Race to the Top” fund - a competitive grant designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform, including increased learning time.⁶
- The \$650 million allocated for the ARRA “Investing in Innovation” fund. This fund awards grants to districts as well as nonprofit organizations partnering with schools and districts to scale up evidence-based practices and programs.
- The School Improvement Grant program that aims to transform chronically low-performing schools. Extended learning time is listed among the key strategies for implementation.
- The president’s 2011 budget increases funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program by \$100 Million, with a policy that makes funds available for extended learning time and after-school programs.⁷

Regardless of funding source, educators at pilot sites should also have the flexibility to create their own approach to ELT, including updating educational goals, staffing plans, labor agreements and schedules. This flexibility spurs innovation and allows schools to find appropriate solutions to for the unique challenges it may face. Flexibility also provides an opportunity for schools to collaborate with external organizations and find instructional strategies that align core academics with enrichment, support services, and family engagement strategies. Partners may include universities, community-based organizations, health centers, businesses, artists, and many others. Such partnerships can contribute expertise and resources in areas that schools are not able to provide to augment the benefits that ELT alone might provide.⁸

ENDNOTES

- ¹. Faberman, D., & Kaplan, C. (2005). *Time for a Change: The Promise of Extended-Time Schools for Promoting Student Achievement*. Boston: Massachusetts 2020.
- ². Rocha, Elena (2008). "Expanded Learning Time in Action." Center for American Progress.
- ³. Smith, B., Roderick, M., & Defener, S.C. (2005). *Extended Learning Time and Student Accountability: Assessing Outcomes and Options for Elementary and Middle Grades*. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(2), 195-236.
- ⁴. Farbman, David A. (2009) "Tracking an Emerging Movement: A Report on Expanded-Time Schools in America". National Center on Time & Learning.
- ⁵. Hoxby, Caroline M., Sonali Murarka, and Jenny Kang (2009). "How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement."
- ⁶. United States Department of Education (2009). "Race to the Top Program Executive Summary."
- ⁷. Center for American Progress and National Center on Time & Learning (2010). "Transforming Schools to Meet the Needs of Students."
- ⁸. Traphagen, Kathleen and Christine Johnson-Staub (2010). *Expanded Time, Enriching Experiences*. Center for American Progress.

DRAFT

SUMMARY

Requires State Board of Education to encourage increased learning time.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to learning time; amending ORS 329.025 and 329.045.

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. ORS 329.025 is amended to read:

329.025. It is the intent of the Legislative Assembly to maintain a system of public elementary and secondary schools that allows students, parents, teachers, administrators, school district boards and the State Board of Education to be accountable for the development and improvement of the public school system. The public school system shall have the following characteristics:

(1) Provides equal and open access and educational opportunities for all students in the state regardless of their linguistic background, culture, race, gender, capability or geographic location;

(2) Assumes that all students can learn and establishes high, specific skill and knowledge expectations and recognizes individual differences at all instructional levels;

(3) Provides each student an education experience that supports academic growth beyond proficiency in established academic content standards and encourages students to attain aspirational goals that are individually challenging;

(4) Provides special education, compensatory education, linguistically and culturally appropriate education and other specialized programs to all students who need those services;

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter [*italic and bracketed*] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 (5) Supports the physical and cognitive growth and development of stu-
2 dents;

3 (6) Provides students with a solid foundation in the skills of reading,
4 writing, problem solving and communication;

5 (7) Provides opportunities for students to learn, think, reason, retrieve
6 information, use technology and work effectively alone and in groups;

7 (8) Provides for rigorous academic content standards and instruction in
8 mathematics, science, English, history, geography, economics, civics, physical
9 education, health, the arts and second languages;

10 **(9) Is structured to provide increased learning time;**

11 [(9)] (10) Provides students an educational background to the end that
12 they will function successfully in a constitutional republic, a participatory
13 democracy and a multicultural nation and world;

14 [(10)] (11) Provides students with the knowledge and skills that will pro-
15 vide the opportunities to succeed in the world of work, as members of fami-
16 lies and as citizens;

17 [(11)] (12) Provides students with the knowledge and skills that lead to
18 an active, healthy lifestyle;

19 [(12)] (13) Provides students with the knowledge and skills to take re-
20 sponsibility for their decisions and choices;

21 [(13)] (14) Provides opportunities for students to learn through a variety
22 of teaching strategies;

23 [(14)] (15) Emphasizes involvement of parents and the community in the
24 total education of students;

25 [(15)] (16) Transports children safely to and from school;

26 [(16)] (17) Ensures that the funds allocated to schools reflect the uncon-
27 trollable differences in costs facing each district;

28 [(17)] (18) Ensures that local schools have adequate control of how funds
29 are spent to best meet the needs of students in their communities; and

30 [(18)] (19) Provides for a safe, educational environment.

31 **SECTION 2.** ORS 329.045 is amended to read:

1 329.045. (1)(a) In order to achieve the goals contained in ORS 329.025, the
2 State Board of Education shall regularly and periodically review and revise
3 its Common Curriculum Goals, performance indicators and diploma require-
4 ments.

5 (b) *[This includes]* **The review and revision conducted under this**
6 **section shall:**

7 (A) **Include** Essential Learning Skills and rigorous academic content
8 standards in mathematics, science, English, history, geography, economics,
9 civics, physical education, health, the arts and second languages. *[School*
10 *districts and public charter schools shall maintain control over course content,*
11 *format, materials and teaching methods. The regular review shall]*

12 (B) Involve teachers and other educators, parents of students and other
13 citizens and *[shall]* provide ample opportunity for public comment.

14 (C) **Strive to find ways to encourage increased learning time. As**
15 **used in this subparagraph, “increased learning time” means a schedule**
16 **that encompasses a longer school day, week or year for the purpose**
17 **of increasing the total number of school hours available to provide:**

18 (i) **Students with instruction in core academic subjects, including**
19 **mathematics, science, English, history, geography, economics, civics,**
20 **the arts and second languages;**

21 (ii) **Students with instruction in subjects other than the subjects**
22 **identified in sub-subparagraph (i) of this subparagraph, including**
23 **health and physical education;**

24 (iii) **Students with the opportunity to participate in enrichment**
25 **activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including**
26 **learning opportunities that may be based on service, experience or**
27 **work and that may be provided by entering into partnerships with**
28 **other organizations; and**

29 (iv) **Teachers with the opportunity to collaborate, plan and engage**
30 **in professional development within and across grades and subjects.**

31 (c) **Nothing in this subsection prevents a school district or public**

1 **charter school from maintaining control over course content, format,**
2 **materials and teaching methods.**

3 (2) The State Board of Education shall continually review and revise all
4 adopted academic content standards necessary for students to successfully
5 transition to the next phase of their education.

6 (3) School districts and public charter schools shall offer students in-
7 struction in mathematics, science, English, history, geography, economics,
8 civics, physical education, health, the arts and second languages that meets
9 the academic content standards adopted by the State Board of Education and
10 meets the requirements adopted by the State Board of Education and the
11 board of the school district or public charter school.

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