

Learning Time in America: Trends to Reform the American School Calendar

A Snapshot of Federal, State, and Local Action

SUMMER 2011



NATIONAL CENTER ON
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Education Commission
of the States



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I. Learning Time in America

Over the last several years, momentum has been building across the country to expand learning time for American students. Educators in schools that have expanded beyond the conventional calendar of 180 six-and-a-half-hour days know that more time enables them to broaden and deepen the curriculum, to better address the learning needs of individual students, and to build in opportunities that enrich students' educational experiences.

Some practitioners even suggest that without more time, schools are unlikely to provide students—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds—with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in college, career, and the 21st century global economy. “When you look at the public schools that are fundamentally changing the trajectory of students’ lives in high poverty communities, the overwhelming majority

offer expanded learning time in school,” asserts Richard Barth, CEO and President of the KIPP Foundation.¹

The momentum to expand time in schools, which began with individual schools and a few pioneering districts breaking from the standard calendar in the 1990s, now extends up to the federal government. Both the Obama

administration and Congress have enacted bold policies to improve low-performing schools, incorporating “increased learning time” as a key strategy. [President Obama situated](#) this policy in a broader context when he declared:

We can no longer afford an academic calendar designed for when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing the land at the end of each day. That calendar may have once made sense, but today it puts us at a competitive disadvantage. The challenges of a new century demand more time in the classroom.²

This new federal push responds to an earlier call from the 1994 [National Time and Learning Commission](#): “If the United States is to grasp the larger education ambitions for which it is reaching, we must strike the shackles of time from our schools.”³

Meanwhile, amidst this growing support for expanding learning time, American schools are confronting some of the most significant cutbacks in education funding in decades. In fact, [nominal per pupil spending](#) by public school districts has

calls the challenge of “doing more with less.”⁵ These leaders have found innovative ways to leverage partnerships, technology, and external funding streams to build more time into their school schedules. As they implement these changes, educators contend they are enhancing their capacity to raise individual achievement and to provide a well-rounded education for all their students.

The following report on the debate and policies concerning school time therefore comes at a potentially defining moment in American schooling. How the federal government, states, districts, and schools manage these dual pressures of, on the one hand, higher expectations and the need to provide more learning time for millions of students to meet these expectations, and, on the other, the limitations necessitated by shrinking resources, stands as one of the great challenges facing American education today.

[The National Center on Time & Learning \(NCTL\)](#), an organization dedicated to redesigning and expanding school time to improve opportunities and outcomes for high-poverty students, and the [Education Commission of the States \(ECS\)](#), with a mission to foster both the exchange of ideas on education issues among the states and long-range strategic thinking, have joined forces to produce this review. Our goal is to help education leaders to better understand the complexities of time-related policy and its far-reaching educational implications. In exploring how policymakers and educators have dealt with the matter of school time at the federal, state, and local levels, NCTL and ECS hope to accelerate the national conversation on how we can best leverage the power of time to realize the vision of a high-quality education for all. We also offer a number of recommendations highlighting fresh ways that policy and research can best support efforts to expand learning time in schools.

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actually dropped from previous years, the first decline since the Great Depression.⁴ Many districts are forced to rely on stopgap measures like furloughs and hiring freezes just to balance their budgets. These furloughs often involve cutting days from the school year, meaning that in some locations, the school year is shrinking.

Yet, such a reaction to tough fiscal times is far from the only possible response. Many other school systems continue to innovate, even in the face of financial adversity. As policymakers and the American public are placing greater expectations on schools to become better at providing a quality education for all—and the bar has been raised even higher with over 40 states adopting the robust college- and career-ready standards known as the [Common Core](#)—countless educators have stepped up to what U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan





II. Momentum on Learning Time at the Federal Level

Ever since the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, the call for more learning time has been a prominent theme in education reform circles. The idea took on more urgency when the Congressionally-mandated 1994 National Education Commission on Time and Learning explored the full ramifications of having built an education system that leaves students and teachers trapped in a “prison of time.”

For many years, the federal policy approach to expanding learning time for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and from low-performing schools had been concentrated

in discrete, complementary programs, such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (voluntary afterschool and summer programming) and Supplemental Education Services (targeted

remedial tutoring). In 2007, however, Congress proposed legislation that would build on state and district models that convert traditional schools to ones operating with expanded time for all students. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) created new and enlarged existing funding streams to support expanded time. Further, as Congress looks ahead to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), increasing learning time for low-performing students has taken a prominent place in policy discussions.

Congressional Proposals to Expand School Time

In recent years, legislation has been proposed in Congress to expand the number of schools that operate with a day and/or year longer than the standard schedule. The central piece of legislation promoting expanded time is the [Time for Innovation Matters in Education \(TIME\) Act](#), previously introduced by the late Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Congressman Donald Payne (D-NJ), and then-Education Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA). The TIME Act was re-introduced in April, 2011 in the Senate by Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Al Franken (D-MN), Michael Bennet (D-CO), and Kristin Gillibrand (D-NY). A companion bill was introduced in the House by Representatives Payne, Mike Honda (D-CA), and Steve Chabot (R-OH).⁶

This legislation draws heavily from the Massachusetts [Expanded Learning Time \(ELT\) Initiative](#) that was launched in 2005. (See box, pp. 9-10.) A statewide competitive grant program, the ELT Initiative funds traditional public schools that choose to add 300 hours to the school year for all students, and the TIME Act calls for the federal



community-based organizations and other community institutions to implement the longer school day and/or year.⁷ It is expected that the TIME Act will, in some form, be incorporated into the upcoming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Recent congressional action has also included a proposed strengthening of the [21st Century Community Learning Centers \(CLCs\)](#) grant program that already supports student learning beyond traditional school hours. This formula grant program, the fourth largest administered by the U.S. Department of Education, is one of the leading sources of federal funding specifically targeted to support students' academic growth by providing more time in productive learning environments. From its inception in the 1990s, the program has grown to \$1.166 billion in 2010.⁸ The current intent of the program is to support [voluntary out-of-school-time programs](#) that serve large numbers of high-poverty students, and are "in active collaboration with the schools the students attend" in order that they might provide constructive academic support or instruction.⁹

In July 2010, following a recommendation put forward in President Obama's FY 2011 budget, the [Senate Appropriations Committee proposed](#) a meaningful policy change that would grant states, districts, and schools the flexibility to use CLC funds to expand school time (i.e., an extension of the school day, week, or year for all enrolled students) along with voluntary afterschool and summer programming. The committee also proposed raising funding for the program to \$1.266 billion (an increase of \$100 million from FY 2010). In explaining the rationale for the change, the committee noted that "The bill [can] be used to help communities establish or expand extended learning time that includes both academic instruction and enrichment opportunities, and to support a more systemic restructuring of the school year."¹⁰ The final budget for FY11 did not include this proposed change, but President Obama has recommended it in his FY 2012 budget.

As Congress looks ahead to the reauthorization of ESEA, increasing learning time for low-performing students has taken a prominent place in policy discussions.

government to support similar grant programs in other states and districts. As in the Massachusetts program, the TIME Act identifies three uses for schools' additional time: core academics, enrichment programming, and teacher collaboration. The TIME Act also calls specifically for preference to be given to those schools that have developed (or will develop) partnerships with

ARRA-Funded Programs Supporting Expanded Time

The momentum to expand school time over the last two years has drawn most of its energy from the Obama administration's ambitious school improvement initiatives. Within this reform agenda, the administration's primary effort to use what it calls "Increased Learning Time" to drive school transformation takes shape through the newly revamped Title I [School Improvement Grants \(SIG\) program](#).

The SIG program has existed for several years, but, until 2009, had been a comparatively modest program within Title I. [As recently as FY 2007](#), School Improvement Grants totaled \$125 million, with a mandate only to distribute grants (on a competitive basis) to Title I schools that had been identified as needing improvement. With a boost from ARRA, however, the SIG initiative has grown exponentially and will distribute over \$4 billion to states through 2012. Accompanying this increase in funding has been the expectation that this program will become a more powerful lever for school improvement. As [Secretary Duncan has explained](#), SIG has been remade in order to tackle "the toughest assignment of all": turning around the lowest-achieving five percent of the nation's elementary and secondary schools.¹¹

To bring about such a massive transformation, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) has laid out four models that districts seeking SIG funds must choose from to address the challenge of lifting the level of student learning in underperforming schools. Two of the options require that schools implement a series of high-impact educational practices. And one of these signature practices is [defined by USED](#) as Increased Learning Time (ILT) or "using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours." Further, the program guidelines allow schools to use time for three purposes—more academics, more enrichment, and more teacher collaboration and professional development—in their efforts to raise the academic achievement of their students.¹² The two school reform models that require ILT—known as "Transformation" and "Turnaround"—have been by far the [most popular options](#) selected by the first round of grantees (74 percent and 20 percent, respectively, of all grantees).¹³ Further, a third possibility ("Restart") allows districts essentially to hand over control of existing schools to educational management organizations, including charter school operators. This option—selected by four percent of grantees—will also likely lead to the emergence of more schools with longer schedules because charters tend to operate with expanded time. (See pp. 19–22.)

As a result of SIG funds aimed at school transformation, the USED has ended up supporting

increases in learning time in as many as [1,150 schools](#) in the 2010–2011 school year alone.¹⁴ During these early stages of implementation, it is difficult to discern the [trends in how schools are leveraging SIG funds](#) to increase learning time. Even with this uncertainty, however, the SIG program represents the largest public funding stream available to support more school time for students enrolled in a targeted school.¹⁵

In addition to SIG, two other major funds that grew out of ARRA have also promoted the idea and the reality of expanded time in schools. The first is RTTT, as the Race to the Top Fund is known. A competitive grant program [designed to](#) push states to develop "comprehensive, coherent, statewide education reform," RTTT calls out Increased Learning Time as one strategy that states should strongly consider in their proposals for turning around low-performing schools.¹⁶ (See box, p. 7.) Delaware, one of the first states to win an RTTT grant, for example, [wrote in its application](#), "New regulation for low-achieving schools, the Partnership Zone, will put in place a negotiating mechanism where the school and LEA [local district] leaders can create conditions for innovation, including extended learning time and staffing flexibility."¹⁷

In a somewhat different vein, expanded learning time also emerges as a recurrent theme among several winners of [Investing in Innovation \(i3\) Fund](#) grants. The i3 monies are intended to support programs and schools with a record of improving

As a result of School Improvement Grant funds aimed at school transformation, as many as 1,150 schools now could have increased learning time.

student achievement, and among the [49 winning applicants](#), a number rely on significant learning time to achieve their objectives. Three winners of lower-tier grants—the New Orleans Recovery District, the Jefferson County (Louisville, Kentucky) school district, and the New Mexico Extended-Year Schools—all rest on a model of providing more instructional time to students. In addition, one of the four winners of "Scale-Up" grants (awarded the maximum \$50 million) is the KIPP network of charter schools. The [KIPP network](#) is perhaps the premier practitioner of more school time, as many of its schools typically operate with upwards of 1,700 annual instructional hours, or up to 60 percent more than the national average of roughly 1,100.¹⁸

Winners of Race to the Top Grants (2010)

Grantee	Budget Not to Exceed...
Delaware*	\$100,000,000
District of Columbia	\$75,000,000
Florida	\$700,000,000
Georgia	\$400,000,000
Hawaii	\$75,000,000
Maryland	\$250,000,000
Massachusetts	\$250,000,000
New York	\$700,000,000
North Carolina	\$400,000,000
Ohio	\$400,000,000
Rhode Island	\$75,000,000
Tennessee*	\$500,000,000

* These states were awarded an RTTT grant in the first round (announced March 2010); all others received the award in the second round (announced August 2010).

Considering the Potential Impact

As of this writing, both Congress and the Obama Administration remain focused on continuing to improve low-performing schools and on using ILT as a core strategy of this reform agenda. One key development has been the [proposal introduced](#) by Senators Kay Hagen (D-NC) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) to reform the School Improvement Grant program. Among its provisions, the [School Turnaround and Rewards \(STAR\) Act requires](#) that schools receiving SIG monies add at least 300 hours to the school year and that they demonstrate clearly how they will implement research-based effective practices. This specificity will be helpful for schools now [struggling to implement](#) the demanding, but still somewhat vague, [requirements of the SIG program](#).¹⁹

For schools, one of the most difficult challenges of the SIG program is to bring about multi-part modifications all at once. These reforms typically include significant staff changes along with a redesigned schedule. Moreover, schools were given little time to develop thoughtful plans before implementing these changes, meaning that many districts found themselves “trying to build the plane while flying it.” [A national survey](#) revealed that only a small minority of districts had experience in implementing comprehensive turnaround strategies or were receiving any assistance from their states to undertake them. As a result, many districts are, for the most part, taking on this substantial school reform effort without the experience or support they may need.²⁰

Sustainability constitutes a second key question. Without the opportunity to receive renewal grants or funding from other sources, the considerable changes brought about by a school’s participation in the SIG program may be difficult to maintain. Indeed, if schools funded through the ARRA SIG grants (or other large federal grants) are to maintain expanded time after the particular grant program ends, they will likely have to explore cost-effective ways to do so. (See chapter 6.)

In light of these challenges, Congress and the Obama Administration seem intent on strengthening and refining the current SIG program. Such refinements are likely to take place as Congress works to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Even beyond this specific approach to encourage effective use of expanded time, reauthorization might also lead Congress to build upon robust policy frameworks (like the TIME Act) to embed expanded time within the array of reform policies aimed at strengthening the education of high-poverty students.



III. Learning Time Across the States

Compared to many other advanced nations, the United States is distinct in the degree of flexibility granted to states to set their own education policies and funding methods.

Even with the growth in the U.S. Department of Education’s influence and funding over the last several years, education is still chiefly a state and local responsibility. Yet, despite this independence from the federal government and, by extension, from one another, states have come to remarkable convergence over the last half century about how much time they require for instruction. The variance among states has been minimal, with the number of days ranging (with a few exceptions) from 175 to 182 and the number of required instructional hours ranging from roughly 1,000 to 1,100. (See Appendix.) The emphasis on educational results, coupled with the nation’s economic downturn, is now causing many states to consider alternatives to the standard school calendar, however.

Scaling Back School Time

Confronting the most severe recession in over 60 years, a number of states have taken steps to reduce the minimum number of school days (or hours) per year in order to relieve some of the burden placed on districts to meet their bottom lines. California, the state facing the largest deficit by far, [enacted legislation](#) in 2009 that permits a school district, county office of education or charter school to shorten the instructional year by up to five school days (i.e., a reduction to 175 from 180) in the 2009-2010 through 2012-2013 fiscal years without incurring the penalties such an action would normally trigger.²¹ Then in Spring 2011, Governor Jerry Brown even suggested that [a cut of an additional 25 days](#) in the coming school year might be necessary.²²

Other states have taken narrower steps. [Arizona passed legislation](#) that reduces the amount of time students in grades 7 and 8 must be enrolled in an instructional program from 1,068 hours to 1,000 hours, beginning in the 2010-2011 fiscal year. The cut of 68 hours is the equivalent of about 10 fewer days.²³ And [Nevada passed a law](#) in spring 2011 authorizing districts to cut up to five non-instructional days from the school year starting in 2011–2012, meaning that professional development for teachers, rather than school time for students, is likely to see reductions.²⁴ Meanwhile, some states have proposed cuts but have yet to pass legislation. Measures to reduce the required minimum school year by up to 10 days were introduced in [Alabama](#), [Mississippi](#) and [South Carolina](#) in the 2010 legislative session, for instance, but did not progress far in the legislative process.²⁵

In other states, rather than definitive reductions to the current minimums, budget cuts have resulted in the tabling of proposals that had been put forward to increase the school year. For instance, former Ohio Governor Ted Strickland (who lost his re-election bid in November 2010) had [proposed](#) in 2009 to add 20 instructional days to the school calendar over a 10-year period.²⁶ While many policy changes Strickland supported in the 2009 [House Bill 1 \(H.B. 1\)](#) were enacted, the recommendation for increased instructional time was stricken from the bill before it reached the governor's desk.²⁷ Meanwhile, a [bill in Maine](#) that would have extended the school year by five days (from 180 to 185) went down to defeat, with opponents citing concerns about costs as the reason for their “nay” vote.²⁸

The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative

In 2005, Massachusetts launched the Expanded Learning Time Initiative. This initiative created a policy model that allows traditional district schools to compete for funding to enable them to redesign their school around an expanded schedule. Districts receive \$1,300 for each student enrolled in the participating schools. The program design includes the following key features:

- **Significantly more school time:** School calendar includes at least 300 more hours per year.
- **Mandatory student participation:** All students participate in the redesigned and expanded school schedule.
- **Balanced use of expanded time:** Redesign adds time for: (1) core academics, (2) enrichment, and (3) teacher planning and professional development.
- **Redesign planning process:** School redesign teams—including teachers, administrators, union representatives, school partners, and parents—create data-driven redesign plans during the year prior to implementation.
- **Partners to expand opportunities:** Schools are encouraged to partner with community organizations, businesses, higher education institutions, art and cultural organizations, and health institutions to expand opportunities for students.
- **Performance agreements.** Schools develop their own measurable, explicit targets for improvement in academic achievement, effective teaching, and well-rounded education. These objectives must be approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

After four years, ELT schools are demonstrating the impact more time can have. Compared to other high-poverty schools and to a set of matched comparison schools, [ELT schools](#) produce far more high-growth schools. (High-growth schools are those where students are learning far faster than average.) There is a fair degree of variation in both implementation and outcomes among the 19 schools, but there are some standout performers, especially among those that have been in the program the longest. For example, fourth-year schools significantly outperform their matched comparison schools in science at the fifth grade, the tested subject where ELT schools provide significantly more time than the matched schools.

The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative, *continued*

The highest-performing ELT schools use high-impact practices as a part of their school redesigns. These practices include:

- Relentless **use of data** to drive continuous improvement and strengthen core instruction;
- Meaningfully **more time in core academic classes** that allows teachers to individualize support for students;
- Dedicated **time for teacher collaboration**, an essential component of developing professional learning communities that lead to stronger instruction; and
- High-quality **enrichment programs** that build skills, interests, and self-confidence.

Two of the schools with the most impressive gains include the [Matthew Kuss Middle School](#) in Fall River and the [Clarence Edwards Middle School](#) in Boston, both of which serve a student population that is at least 80 percent low-income. A year before becoming an ELT school, the Kuss had been the first school in the state to be designated “chronically underperforming.” Over the last four years, however, Kuss students have made steady achievement gains, with the school meeting its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) improvement targets for the past two academic years. The Edwards, too, had been a struggling school in danger of being closed, but, in the last two years, its graduates (8th graders) have posted proficiency rates in ELA nearly that of the state average and math proficiency that exceeds the state average.

Expanding School Time

Even during this era of tightening budgets, other states are enacting or seriously considering school time expansion. One state that has emerged as a leader in promoting expanded school time is Massachusetts, with its [Expanded Learning Time \(ELT\)](#) that “enables schools to significantly expand the hours and days in their school schedules to create integrated learning experiences for all students that are responsive to students’ needs.”²⁹ The ELT Initiative now supports 19 schools across nine districts, with the schools serving a total of approximately 10,500 students. [Over the last three years](#), the ELT Initiative, which allots \$1,300 per student to participating schools, has been essentially level-funded at about \$14 million per year.³⁰ (See box on previous page and above.) Further, in January 2010, Massachusetts enacted an [education reform law](#) that will, in effect, create even more expanded-time schools through the lifting of the state’s charter school cap and the establishment of “innovation schools” (i.e., in-district charters).

Other states taking direct action on learning time include Washington, which [passed a bill](#) in 2009 that transitions the instructional year from a district-wide annual average of 1,000 hours to a minimum 1,080 instructional hours for students in grades 7 to 12 and a minimum 1,000 instructional hours for students in grades 1 to 6. For kindergartners, the instructional year will increase from a minimum of 450 instructional hours to at least 1,000 instructional hours.³¹

Connecticut has [passed a law](#) which allows low-performing schools to add instructional hours as a strategy to raise student achievement.³² Likewise, the [Maryland legislature](#) in 2010 directed the state board of education to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models in low-performing and at-risk schools, including extended-year, year-round, or other models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time. The measure also calls for the state board to encourage county boards to use the school scheduling models that are determined to be most effective in enhancing student achievement in low-performing or at-risk schools.³³

Even during this era of tightening budgets, many states are enacting or seriously considering school time expansion.

Interestingly, Hawaii, the state that had enacted the most dramatic cut in instructional days two years ago (going from 180 days to 163), has now reversed itself to once again require 180 days (for the 2011–2012 year with 178 days in 2010–2011). Further, the legislature has enacted a law that requires schools to operate with 190 days—which would be the highest state minimum in the nation—and

more instructional hours by 2015. (See box below and on next page.) Meanwhile, in Colorado, which is among the states with the fewest required instructional days per year, former Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones [convened a commission](#) with a mandate to explore expanded-time options for districts and the state, as well as to collect

Oklahoma required a shorter school year than neighboring states and recognizing that many schools actually used some allotted instructional hours for other purposes (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, state testing, sporting events, etc.), Garrett formed a [Time Reform Task Force](#) to explore the possibility of expanding the school year in Oklahoma beyond 175 days. The task force, in recommending that every school in the state conduct [an internal time audit](#), jumpstarted a first-in-the-nation effort to encourage teachers and school administrators statewide to use the time they do have more productively. Additionally, Garrett's time reform agenda helped prompt the

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information on best practices on expanded time use in Colorado. The commission conducted a statewide [listening tour](#) in fall 2010 to garner ideas for improving programs and enhancing school/community partnerships and will release a report in summer 2011.³⁴ (See box, p.14.)

A few years earlier, a similar approach was undertaken in Oklahoma by former State Commissioner of Education Sandy Garrett, one of the first state leaders to explore an agenda of expanding school time statewide. Alarmed that



The School Calendar Pendulum in Hawaii

Hawaii's school calendar minimums have been quite volatile of late, jumping from 180 days in the 2008–2009 school year to 163 in 2009–2010 and back up to 178 in the most recent academic year (2010–2011), with plans already in the works to expand the minimums beyond 180 days. The scaleback to 163 days took place when the state legislature, facing a major budget shortfall, cut education funding by \$473.7 million over two years. In order to manage through these drastic cuts, the governor, department of education, state board and Hawaii State Teachers Association struck an agreement to shorten the school year by 17 days to save money. (Hawaii is the only state in the nation that operates as a single school district and, thus, the school calendar is also a part of the negotiated statewide agreement with the state's teachers.) For the 2008–2009 school year, the salaries of teachers and other school employees were reduced on the bases of this shorter school year, which included a number of what came to be known as “furlough Fridays.”¹

Interestingly, this reduction ran in contrast to an under-the-radar effort to expand time in a targeted number of schools serving poor communities. In 2002, the state had increased education choices by enabling charter conversions and allowing eligible nonprofit organizations to manage and operate these schools. One of the organizations, the [Ho'okako'o Corporation](#) (HC), was contracted to convert three of these schools. HC'S approach encouraged schools to expand their schedules so that they could build in more learning time for the students and integrate other effective practices into the new school model. The [Kualapuu School](#), for example, has leveraged an additional hour to achieve “dramatic results.”²

The School Calendar Pendulum in Hawaii, *continued*

Meanwhile, the dramatic reduction in school days for the rest of Hawaii's schools did not sit well with many members of the public, especially parents, who believed their **children were being shortchanged**.³ By October 2009, **two lawsuits had been filed** by two groups of parents in hopes of discontinuing the furloughs. A month later, about 50 parents and students **protested outside the Capitol building**, demanding that the state restore the school year to its original length.⁴ The state's decision even garnered national attention, with articles on the furloughs appearing in *Time* and the *Wall Street Journal*.⁵ Perhaps most troubling for the state's leaders were the **comments** from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who not only **penned an op-ed** in the *Honolulu Star Advertiser* chastising the state for its decision, but also suggested that the action might lessen the state's chances of receiving federal Race to the Top funds. As he told other education leaders, "I don't know anyone who could make a case that eliminating 10 percent of your school days is good for Hawaii."⁶ Public pressure peaked in April 2010 when parents and students staged a **week-long sit-in** outside then-Governor Linda Lingle's office.⁷

In response, the **legislature acted** in the spring of 2010 to restore most of the original school year (to 178 days) and authorized a withdrawal of \$67 million (or as much as necessary) from the Hawaii hurricane relief fund to finance these additional instructional days.⁸ Additionally, the legislature **took the further step** of directing the Hawaii Department of Education, with the board of education and the governor's office, to submit to the legislature before the 2012 legislative session, a plan to increase the number of instructional days to 190 and an increase in instructional hours to 1,140, beginning in the 2015–2016 school year.⁹ The new governor, Neil Abercrombie, has indicated his strong support for pursuing this plan for Hawaii's schools, though, as the fiscal crisis continues, compromise legislation has delayed the implementation of an increase in instructional hours, but expansion of the school year to 180 days will continue, as planned.¹⁰

¹ For information on the 17-day furlough, see the Hawaii Department of Education website at: <http://doe.k12.hi.us/news/furlough/index.htm>

² Susan Essoyan, "Once-struggling Campus Makes Educational U-Turn," *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, 22 May 2011.

³ Suzanne Roig, "How Hawaii's Budget Led to Furloughed Kids," *Time*, 24 October 2009.

⁴ "Parents, Students Protest Furloughs at Capitol," *KITV News*, 9 November 2009.

⁵ Roig, "How Hawaii's Budget"; and Louise Radnofsky, "Duncan Scolds Hawaii on School Furloughs," *Wall Street Journal*, 24 October 2009.

⁶ Arne Duncan, "Hawaii Erred in Cutting Education," *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, 23 October 2009; Loren Moreno, "U.S. Education Chief Chides Hawaii for School Furloughs," *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, 13 November 2009.

⁷ Herbert Sample, "2 More Arrested at Hawaii Furlough Sit In," *Associated Press*, 15 April 2010.

⁸ S.B. 2124, 25th Legislature, State of Hawaii, 2010.

⁹ H.B. 2486, 25th Legislature, State of Hawaii, 2010.

¹⁰ Mark Niesse, "Longer School Day Requirement in Hawaii Delayed," *Associated Press*, 29 April 2011.

state's two largest districts (Tulsa and Oklahoma City) to experiment with innovative approaches to expand or reconfigure school time. (See box, p.13.)

In January 2008, the then-governor of Rhode Island, Donald Carcieri, also convened a task force to investigate how the state could improve its schools with a particular focus on the state's five urban districts. The **Urban Education Task Force**, after 18 months of work, delivered **seven recommendations** to the governor and the general assembly. One recommendation was to launch

an expanded learning time initiative that would begin at a few demonstration sites and then spread across the state through a public-private partnership. As a follow-up to that recommendation, the legislature in 2010 allocated \$100,000 for selected schools to engage in the planning necessary to convert to a redesigned school day; four schools participated.

Oklahoma: Advancing the Expanded-Time Agenda

At her annual convention for school leaders in summer 2008, Superintendent Sandy Garrett spoke in her keynote address of the need for Oklahoma's schools to take seriously the idea that the state's students need more time in school if they are to be properly prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century. At the event, Garrett also announced to district superintendents and principals the results of the Time Reform Task Force, which called on the state legislature to expand the state's minimum school year by 10 days.

Though the state as a whole has not acted on this policy prescription, the state's two largest districts have pushed forward with an agenda to break from the conventional school calendar. Tulsa has taken an approach of expanding time and, in turn, redesigning its school day in targeted schools. Two middle schools have leveraged School Improvement Grant dollars to operate a school schedule that is nearly 8.5 hours per day. The schools have added time not only for academics, but also for more teacher collaboration, so that they can work together to transform the school's instructional practices. Additionally, the schools now offer students an array of enrichment opportunities designed to enhance student engagement.

Oklahoma City has taken a different route with regard to reforming school time. Trying to curb the effects of the [well-documented summer learning loss](#) on students, the [district school board has adopted](#) a "continuous learning calendar" for each of its 78 schools. This modified calendar cuts the long summer vacation from three months down to two, although without adding days to the current 173-day school year. Oklahoma City schools are now in session from early August through early June, with a pair of two-week intersessions (October and March) built into the school year in addition to the regular holiday breaks. Students in need of remediation are able to spend these intersessions in focused academic support classes.¹

¹ Megan Rolland, "Oklahoma City School Board Adopts New Calendar," *Daily Oklahoman*, 13 December 2010.



Brooklyn Generation School, Brooklyn, NY

Colorado: Innovation in the Face of Fiscal Constraints

Colorado has a long and continuing history of school innovation, including enacting a landmark [teacher and principal evaluation law](#) in 2010. When it comes to expanded time, not only does Colorado boast roughly 100 charter schools offering students a longer day and/or year, but state leadership has also demonstrated strong commitment to the idea of more time, and is actively exploring how to implement such a policy. Meanwhile, many rural districts in the state, facing tight budgets and stringent restrictions on raising additional revenues, have shifted to a four-day school week to balance budgets.

The primary driver of momentum on time reform in Colorado is the [Expanded Learning Opportunities \(ELO\) Commission](#). Formed in October 2010 by then-Commissioner of Education, Dwight Jones, the commission is seeking to “outline a vision of student-centered learning that transcends the school day and location and encourages education systems to use time, partners and technology in new ways to achieve greater long-term outcomes for students.” Chaired by a member of the state board of education, Elaine Gantz Berman, the commission includes a diverse mix of educators, legislators, union and higher education representatives, and community-based organization leaders. The anticipated release date of the commission’s report is summer 2011, and it is expected to spark action at both the state and district levels.¹

In addition to policy momentum, Colorado has at least 100 expanded-time schools already in operation, most of them charter schools. The state has also awarded 19 schools School Improvement Grants totaling \$36.5 million. One of the School Improvement Grants grantees, Fort Logan School in Sheridan, a low-income suburb of Denver, has made clear that expanded learning time stands as a [central feature of its model](#). The school already operated with a daily schedule of nearly seven hours, and now the school has extended three days a week by another two hours each, resulting in an additional 126 hours of annual instructional time. The school has been strategic about how these extra hours can be optimized for learning and enhancing student engagement, using the expanded time to provide science instruction, additional literacy support, and enrichment programming for all students. To enable the expanded days, the school is utilizing a “second shift” of educators, including literacy staff, teachers from other area schools, and community partners. Fort Logan School’s innovations have caught the collective eye of the other SIG schools in the state and many are seeking to replicate pieces of the Sheridan school’s model.

Yet, even as the number of expanded-time schools is growing, so, too, is the number of districts that have shifted to a four-day week. Currently, of the 180 school districts in Colorado, over one third (67) now operate on a four-day week in at least some of their schools. A four-day week does not necessarily cut the total number of hours by operating with four longer school days. As of 2004, a four-day week had been adopted by [52 districts](#), which in itself was a rise from [36 districts in 2002](#).² Most of these districts are rural. The four-day week has become a popular option due in part to the [constitutional mandates](#) that limit both how much municipalities can increase revenues through taxes and other fees and how they can direct spending. Districts often feel as if they have little choice but to cut school days in order to meet their bottom line.

¹ Colorado Department of Education, “Commissioner Dwight D. Jones Announces Launch of Expanded Learning Opportunities Commission,” Press release, 21 October 2010.

² Tom Kenworthy, “Colorado Schools Give High Score to 4-day Weeks,” *USA Today*, 13 June 2004; Jodi Wilgoren, “Cutting Class on Fridays to Cut School Budgets,” *New York Times*, 9 June 2002.





IV. The Complex Picture of School Time in Districts

Across the country, districts have become the real pioneers in expanding learning time, and the movement appears to be spreading.

Many districts, especially those with large populations of children living in poverty, have been targeting more time for low-performing schools, while others have adopted a more systemic approach. Meanwhile, charter schools have, for many years, stood at the forefront of the expanded time movement. Not only do a majority of charters operate with a school day and/or year longer than the national average, but most of the highest-performing charters rely on significantly more time as part of their educational model.

The District Drive to Expand Time

A New York City initiative that used additional time for learning in a group of schools known as the “[Chancellor’s District](#),” established in 1996 by then-Chancellor Rudy Crew was perhaps the original expanded learning time program. Crew assembled some of the lowest-performing schools in the city into a single unit, where they were required to implement a rigorous reading curriculum and build academic support classes into the school day, which had been expanded

Expanded-Time Reform in Three Districts

Before the federal School Improvement Grant program was re-tooled to include Increased Learning Time as an educational priority for turning around struggling schools, some districts already took the initiative to add significant time to some of their lowest-performing schools. Three of the longest-running programs are in Volusia County, Florida; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Buffalo, New York. (Buffalo was forced to phase out its initiative at the end of the 2010–2011 school year because of significant cuts in funding from the state.)¹

Though developed independently from each other, these three initiatives have remarkable similarities. To begin with, each district has provided resources to add about an hour more instructional time per day for all students in targeted schools. Further, each district has created a similar support structure—including a dedicated deputy superintendent, a network of academic coaches, curricular resources and additional funding—to aid chronically underperforming schools in transforming their practices and culture. Finally, even as they preceded the federal effort, each of the district initiatives entails the implementation of key strategies highlighted in the School Improvement Grant model to improve schools (e.g., data-driven instruction and enhanced teacher collaboration).

Such strategies are reflected in the ways in which the schools focus time use in three key areas. First, each district has sought to generate broader academic impacts by installing *new* elements into the school day like daily writing lessons (Pittsburgh), daily science (Volusia) and core classes with differentiated instruction (Buffalo). Second, each district has added targeted academic support classes in an effort to best meet all students' academic needs and, in the view of the educators, to fully activate the Response to Intervention (RTI) intensive instruction model. Finally, in an attempt to improve teaching and learning over the long term, each district has insisted that schools set regular collaborative planning sessions where teachers can discuss individual student progress, share effective instructional methods and cultivate the development of a professional learning community. Though none of the districts have experienced increased rates of proficiency in every target school, a number of schools in each have posted markedly better student outcomes on reading, math, writing and science assessments. And in Buffalo and Volusia a vast majority of the schools have been judged to demonstrate adequate annual performance by their respective states.

¹ Information drawn from David Farberman, *Leveraging More Time To Improve Schools: A Study of Three Districts* (Boston, Mass.: National Center on Time & Learning, 2011) Forthcoming.

by 20 minutes. When he moved to the superintendency of Miami-Dade in 2004, Crew instituted a similar project called the [School Improvement Zone](#), which expanded the school day by one hour and lengthened the school year by two weeks (i.e., 10 additional school days) for the 39 schools involved. These two initiatives ceased once Crew left the respective districts, though there is evidence that both the [New York](#) and [Miami](#) initiatives generated some progress at a number of the targeted schools over time.³⁵

Following in the same tradition, three other districts—[Volusia County, Florida](#); [Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania](#); and [Buffalo, New York](#)—have been providing more time to a targeted set of schools for at least four consecutive years.³⁶ (See box above.)

The operating theory informing these initiatives is that by expanding time for all enrolled students, rather than just targeted groups, the school might better be able to harness expanded time to accelerate a series of reforms that aim to strengthen teaching and learning across the whole school.

Beyond these long-standing models of expanded time, a number of large districts have recently committed to adding time. [Houston Independent School District](#), which already features a school year with more instructional hours than many other large urban districts (7 hours per day, compared to the national average of 6.7 hours), extended the school year of the entire district from 175 to 180 days, starting in the 2010–2011 school year.³⁷ Moreover, Houston also began a new initiative called [Apollo 20](#) in four high schools and

five middle schools. The schools feature a long day (about 8 hours) and longer year (185 days in 2010–2011 and 190 days in 2011–2012). [School officials have acknowledged](#) that such a move is a reaction to the spreading influence of the many KIPP and YES charter schools that have been established in the Houston area. Both of these sets of charter schools feature an extended day and year.³⁸

Chicago is another example of a district where charter schools represent a leading force in time-reform efforts. Several years ago, former Mayor Richard M. Daley created a mechanism to decentralize district management. This process allows the district to establish new charter schools or convert existing schools to independent entities within the district (either as fully independent charters or “contract schools” that are essentially in-district charters). As of the 2010–2011 school year, there are 91 of these “[Renaissance 2010](#)”

schools, many of which feature a longer day and/or year.³⁹ In contrast, traditional Chicago schools currently have [one of the shortest school years](#) among the nation’s largest districts at a mere 914 hours annually, though this status might change with a [new law](#) that allows Chicago to expand its school day. Certainly, the new mayor, Rahm Emanuel, has made [expanded time a priority](#) for his administration.⁴⁰

The [Louisiana Recovery School District \(RSD\)](#) is a special district that took full shape after Hurricane Katrina caused the closure of many schools. This district includes 25 non-charter schools (23 of them in New Orleans proper; 2 in other towns) and has over 45 independent charter schools.⁴¹ [All school principals](#) in the RSD are granted the flexibility to innovate, free from “cultural norms and statutory requirements,” and schools have taken advantage of their autonomy by implementing a longer day and year. The district

Examples of Expanding the School Year

In 2009, Balsz, a [small district](#) of elementary and middle schools in Phoenix, Arizona, that serves a population that is 80 percent low-income and about 40 percent English language learners, expanded its year by 20 days, bringing the total school year to 200 days. The increase in the number of days involved a 9 percent pay increase for teachers. Funding came from voter-approved taxes, federal stimulus money, and a previously unused provision of Arizona law that increases per-pupil funding by 5 percent for districts willing to extend to 200 days. In the year since the calendar expansion, student reading scores increased 19 percent in grades 3 and 4 and 43 percent in grades 5 and 6.

Balsz Superintendent Jeff Smith credits his students’ growth in proficiency to the additional days. Indeed, he has become such a believer in the power of more time to improve outcomes that he predicts a longer year is “inevitable” in many more districts. As he explains, “If we are serious about being globally competitive—and we need to be—then we need to consider how much time and how many resources we’re putting into an educational system.”¹

Now others are following Balsz’s lead. An [elementary school in Florida](#) will expand to 200 days starting in the 2011–2012 school year, specifically citing the Arizona district’s success as the reason.² Though it is not a public school system, the [Archdiocese of Los Angeles](#), a district that includes over 250 schools and 52,000 students, [announced in late January 2011](#) that it would expand its school year also to 200 days.³ While the proposal was not universally supported at first, the superintendent, [Kevin Baxter](#), explained that each individual school would have the opportunity to decide whether to adopt the revamped calendar. A week after the policy was announced, Baxter anticipated that 70 percent of schools would convert to the 200-day schedule in the 2011–2012 school year.⁴

¹ Mary Johnson Patt, “Longer School Year Helps Turn the Tide,” *District Administration*, October 2010.

² Katherine Albers, “Collier Plans to Pilot Extended School Year at Parkside Elementary in the Fall,” *Naples News*, 6 January 2011.

³ Mitchell Landsberg, “L.A. Catholic Schools To Add 20 Days to Academic Year,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 2011.

⁴ Kelly Puente, “Catholic Schools Get Option for Longer Year,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, 2 February 2011.

schools operate with an 8.5-hour day and a school year of 190 days.⁴² Most of the charters have also implemented a longer day and/or year in order to meet their students' educational needs.

Boston, which over the last decade has supported a number of initiatives and policies that add substantial school time at individual sites (e.g., pilot, Expanded Learning Time, and turnaround schools), has now **publicly declared** its commitment to adding more school time throughout the district. As the city negotiates the new teachers' contract, the administration has issued a statement of principles that notes, "In order to compete with charter schools and our suburban neighbors, the Boston Public Schools must expand the classroom day while giving our teachers more time for professional development and class preparation."⁴³

Charter Schools: Breaking from Tradition

Charter schools, which in most states are authorized as autonomous self-contained districts, have collectively been the greatest engine of the growth of expanded-time schools. An analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's 2007-08 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) revealed that 6 in 10 charters operate with a school day and/or year longer than the national average.⁴⁴ Charter schools comprise 75 percent of the total in a national database of schools with substantially more time compiled by the National Center on Time & Learning.⁴⁵

In some ways, charter schools, offer a kind of "natural experiment" on the question of the adequacy of the conventional school calendar. Founders of charters, most of which start as brand-new schools, are presented with a straightforward challenge to establish a school that will meet their future students' educational needs.



KIPP Bridge, Oakland, CA

outperforming traditional public schools.⁴⁶ Still, early research indicates that those with more time are among those more likely to be high-performing. In an analysis of Boston charters that significantly outperformed their district counterparts, for example, the **American Institute of Research** points to the charters' much larger quantity of instructional hours as a key reason why charter students post higher rates of proficiency.⁴⁷ Further, a study of **New York City charter schools** found that, among a broad range of school characteristics, one of the strongest predictors of higher student achievement is more school time (i.e., a longer year and, by association, a longer day).⁴⁸

Not only does the fact that a majority of charter schools have longer days and/or years mean that there are already well over a thousand public schools with non-traditional calendars, but it also suggests that this number is likely to grow over the coming years for two reasons. First, there will be more charters coming on line, a direct result of federal policy and funding. U.S. Department of Education's **Race to the Top (RTTT)** Fund articulated an explicit preference for states that have laws in place that do "not prohibit or effectively inhibit" the number of charter schools established. Consequently, **at least 13 states passed laws** to loosen or eliminate previous restrictions on charter schools, an action which has accelerated the establishment of new charters.⁴⁹ Along with prompting this modification in state charter policy, federal fiscal incentives will continue to stimulate the growth of charter schools by providing funds that help to underwrite charter start-up costs. In fiscal year (FY) 2010 alone, the U.S. Department of Education disbursed **over \$250 million** for this purpose.⁵⁰

Evidence that charter schools also generate a broader effect on district school practices provides

The operating theory of these initiatives is that by expanding time for all enrolled students the school might accelerate a series of reforms that aim to strengthen teaching and learning across the whole school.

A majority of charter educators decide that the traditional calendar provides insufficient time for their students to achieve proficiency in the state's learning standards. So, not bound by fixed district policies related to school time, a longer day and/or year becomes the option of choice. Some studies suggest that charter schools, as a group, have **a mixed record** when it comes to

Considering an Alternative to Reducing School Time

Some districts across the country, faced with significant strains on their budgets, are choosing to decrease the number of days in the school year and, in so doing, reduce the compensation to teachers and other school employees. As more districts put this option on the table, it is worth asking if there may be potentially harmful educational impacts and, by contrast, if there could be other means to reduce costs in ways that limit negative effects on students.

The literature on the link of time and learning is rich, but one [particularly relevant study](#) to the discussion of a shorter school year looked at the effect of “snow days” on test performance. (Closing schools for snow essentially acts to shorten the year, at least in terms of the number of days preceding the state assessments.) Examining differences in performance among a few districts in Maryland, the researchers found that in academic years with an average number of unscheduled closures (5), the number of 3rd graders performing satisfactorily in both reading and math is nearly three percent lower than in years with no school closures. While seemingly a small difference, the authors estimate that more than half of schools failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 3rd-grade math or reading under No Child Left Behind, would have met AYP goals if schools had been open on all scheduled days.¹ Thus, reducing school days to cut costs may lead schools to slide backwards on their quest to meet AYP.

As an alternative to cutting back days to reduce expenditures, small adjustments to class size would also yield fiscal savings, but would likely have no measurable impact on educational outcomes. No doubt, class size is a charged issue. Many believe that a smaller class size leads to more individualized attention and more learning, and so are resistant to raise class size. [Voters in Florida](#), for example, in November 2010 turned back a constitutional amendment that would have relaxed minimums on class size, while [legislation in Idaho](#) to increase minimum class size (and, in turn, reduce the teacher workforce) met with considerable public resistance.²

Research on class size is substantive enough that [researchers](#) generally [agree](#) that the effects of class size on student performance for primary grade students fade as numbers of students get much higher than 20 per class.³ (Research on class size in higher grades is not as well developed.) Because the mean class size at the elementary level in the U.S. public schools is 23.8, schools would have to achieve significant reductions to make a difference.⁴ On the other hand, increasing class size from, say, 25 to 26 students across every classroom in a school will likely not affect student performance. But increasing class size, even just by one student, could still have a positive impact on the budget.

In fact, the cost reduction generated from a slightly higher class size will be greater than that of reducing the school year. Using the assumption that the largest cost savings for either of these changes would be a reduction in teaching costs, the Education Commission of the States has estimated that a small increase in class sizes (from 25 to 26)—and, in turn, effectively eliminating one full-time teacher by cutting costs roughly equivalent to one teacher’s salary—could result in greater cost savings than a five-day decrease in the length of the school year. (See table next page.) These [estimates](#) were based on a 500-student school that pays the teachers an average salary of \$54,319, which is the national average.⁵

	Standard School	With a Shortened School Year	With Increased Class Sizes
Variable: Days/Year	180 Days	175 Days	180 Days
Variable: Avg. Class Size	25	25	26
Constant: Avg. Teacher Salary	\$54,319	\$54,319	\$54,319
Total Teaching Costs	\$1,357,975	\$1,320,253	\$1,305,745
Total Savings		\$37,722	\$52,230
Percentage Savings		2.8%	3.8%

¹ David Marcotte and Stuart Hemelt, "Unscheduled School Closings and School Performance," Discussion paper 2923 (Bonn, Germany: Institute for the Study of Labor, 2007).

² "Florida Voters Reject Class-Size Changes," *Miami Herald*, 3 November 2010; Betsy Z. Russell, "Idaho Bill Increasing Class Sizes Hits Standstill," *Idaho Spokesman Review*, 2 March 2011.

³ Eric Hanushek, "The Economics of Schooling: Production and Efficiency in Public Schools. *The Journal of Economic Literature* 24 (1996), pp. 1141-1177; Hanushek, "The Impact of Differential School Expenditures on School Performance," *Educational Researcher* 18:4 (1989), pp. 45-65; Hanushek, *Some Findings from the Tennessee STAR Experiment and Other Investigations of Class Size Reductions* (Rochester, N.Y.: Wallis Institute of Political Economy Department, 1999); Barbara Nye, Larry Hedges and Spyros Konstantopoulos, "The Effects of Small Classes on Academic Achievement: The Results of the Tennessee Class Size Experiment," *American Educational Research Journal* 37(2000), pp. 123-151.

⁴ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education Indicators: 2010*, Table D 2.4.

⁵ National Education Association, *Rankings & Estimates: 2010*, December 2009.

a second reason why the number of charter schools is likely to grow. As a [USED-sponsored study](#) concluded: “Most districts implemented new educational programs, made changes in educational structures in district schools, and/or created new schools with programs that were similar to those in the local charter schools.”⁵¹ Because charters often revolve around a longer day and/or year, such an innovation may spread into traditional public



Arthur Ashe Charter School, New Orleans, LA

schools, as well, as is happening already in cases like with [Houston’s Apollo 20 schools](#).⁵²

Reductions to the School Year

Meanwhile, for other districts, momentum seems to be swinging in the opposite direction. There are no comprehensive national data collected on reductions to local school calendars, but anecdotal evidence suggests that as state funding for districts declines, districts have concluded that reducing the number of school days (and, in turn, the district’s operational costs) is an unavoidable result. In Oregon, for example, districts from [Springfield to Eugene](#) to [North Clackamas](#) have cut the 2010–2011 school year by up to 10 days in order to save teaching jobs, even though the [state has warned these districts](#) that such reductions will likely mean they will not meet state minimums for instructional hours.⁵³ A [report](#) published recently in Michigan showed that almost all the state’s districts operated less than 180 days, the number that until 2003 had been the minimum required in the state. According to the report, 4 in 10 Michigan districts operated on fewer than 170 days. One superintendent explained that “In contract negotiations, districts now routinely trade a shorter calendar for smaller teacher raises.”⁵⁴

The situation is perhaps the most dramatic in California. A survey by the [California Legislative Analyst’s Office](#) in Winter 2011 revealed that of the 328 respondent districts, 57 percent have reduced

their amount of instructional days, thus taking advantage of the state’s policy that allows a lower number of minimum days.⁵⁵ The details in the [case of Los Angeles Unified](#) (LAUSD) are revealing. In the spring of 2010, with the district facing a budget deficit of \$640 million, then Superintendent Ramon Cortines announced a plan that, with the blessing of the various unions, would cut 10 total school days over two years (five from the 2009–2010 school year and five from the 2010–2011 school year, plus an additional two professional development days in 2010–2011). As a result of the agreement to shrink the year, the district would save upwards of \$150 million in costs by furloughing teachers, administrators, and other school employees. Second, the district would retain up to 1,400 LAUSD employees as a result of the savings generated from the furloughs and would be able to delay the increase of the minimum class size that had, by a previous school board ruling, been set to take effect in the 2010–2011 school year.⁵⁶

The decision by district leaders to reduce the number of school days and thereby the pay of the current full cohort of teachers (and other employees) might make some sense from a management perspective. Yet, in terms of educational impact, the choice may not be as prudent. (See box, pp. 20–21.) As Secretary Duncan [recently explained](#) in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute, “The wrong way to increase productivity in an era of tight budgets is to cut back in a manner that damages school quality and hurts children. I’m talking about steps like reducing the number of days in the school year, slashing instructional time spent on task, eliminating the arts and foreign languages, abandoning promising reforms, and laying off talented, young teachers.”⁵⁷

The Four-Day School Week

Another policy that some districts (particularly those in rural areas) have adopted in an attempt to reduce costs has been to allow districts to transition to a four-day school week, an arrangement that typically maintains the same number of total school hours by operating with four longer days. The four-day school week is appealing because it promises to save money by reducing transportation costs—an especially large expenditure in rural districts—as well as energy and some personnel expenditures. This strategy has actually been around for decades, as the first use appears to have been in South Dakota in the 1930s.⁵⁸ The idea gained greater currency during the energy crisis of the early 1970s, when districts in New Mexico implemented the alternative schedule. Since then each new economic downturn has led more and more districts to implement the four-day school week.⁵⁹ Although the majority of the nation’s districts operate under a traditional school calendar, researchers at the University of Southern Maine [found](#) that approximately 120 districts (of 15,000

districts nationwide) in 17 states employ a four-day school week.⁶⁰ And [this number may grow](#) as more districts consider ways to cut costs.⁶¹

While some districts hope that the four-day week will reduce their total expenditures by up to 20 percent, [recent analysis by the Education Commission of the States](#) (ECS) determined that this amount may be an overestimate. Instead, ECS found that the districts had saved up to 5.4 percent of their total expenditures by moving to a four-day school week, though districts are more likely to save between 0.4 and 2.5 percent. Districts with a four-day week are able to produce a fairly

and a decrease in hours (and, thus, pay) for some support staff. Every district that has adopted a four-day week so far has done so without cutting teacher pay or benefits, and this compensation traditionally accounts for 65 percent of total education expenditures. Teacher pay has held steady because even with one fewer school day per week, the total number of weekly school hours remains the same (e.g., five 6.4-hour days become four 8-hour days).⁶²

While the positives and negatives of the four-day week have been debated, research on the impact of the schedule is extremely limited, especially as it relates to student achievement.⁶³ A report from the Southern Regional Education Board found that districts that adopted the four-day week had demonstrated “. . . anecdotal information [which] seems to point merely to a ‘lack of harm’ where student achievement is concerned.”⁶⁴ Because the school districts that have adopted a four-day week are typically small (student enrollments of fewer than 1,000 students) and rural, it is more difficult to determine what impact the adoption of a four-day week would have on student achievement in large districts or districts located in urban or suburban settings.⁶⁵

“The wrong way to increase productivity in an era of tight budgets is to cut back in a manner that damages school quality and hurts children. I’m talking about steps like reducing the number of days in the school year..”

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

significant reduction (20 percent) in their travel costs—from buses operating 20 percent fewer days—but the only other savings tend to result from a slight reduction in heating/cooling costs



Annual Hours of Some Expanded-Time Models Compared to National Average



Expanded-Time Model Details

Model	# Schools	# Students	Location	Notes
Achievement First*	17	4,500	CT and NY	Network of charter schools; began with Amistad Academy (New Haven, CT)
Accelerated Learning Academies	7	4,000	Pittsburgh, PA	School improvement initiative of Pittsburgh Public Schools
Apollo 20	9	7,000	Houston, TX	School improvement initiative of Houston Independent School District
Balsz School District	5	2,900	Phoenix, AZ	Whole district conversion to 200-day year
Expanded Learning Time Initiative*	19	10,500	9 districts in MA	Statewide competitive grant program
KIPP Academy*	99	26,000	22 states	National network of charter schools
Recovery School District*	25 (district), 55 (charter)	40,000	New Orleans, LA (and region)	Formed post-Katrina; mix of charter- and district-operated schools; time listed is for district schools
Uncommon Schools*	11	10,000	NY and NJ	Network of charter schools; began with North Star Academy (Newark, NJ)
NATIONAL AVERAGE	n/a	n/a	n/a	According to data from the 2007–08 <i>Schools and Staffing Survey</i> , the average year is 179 days and average day is 6.7 hours (i.e., 1,199 hours)**
<p>* Annual hour total represents a rounded average across multiple sites. Other models have fixed schedules across schools. ** See Tammy Kolbe, Mark Partridge and Fran O'Reilly, <i>Time and Learning in Schools: A National Profile</i> (Boston, Mass.: National Center on Time & Learning, and Storrs, CT: Center for Education Policy Analysis, March 2011).</p>				



V. School Time in Transition

Aside from policies around the total amount of required school time, a fair degree of variety exists among schools and districts in the ways in which they use the time that they do have—both in the course of the traditional year and during those times when there is no school scheduled (e.g., summer).

Of course, there is a great deal of diversity of time usage across America's 150,000 public schools. Explored below are some of the major issues and emerging practices.

Rethinking Vacation Time

Not only is the school calendar of 180 days fairly standard across the country, so, too, is the fact that these 180 days typically fall between the months of September and June (or August through May in some states). The long summer vacation

has been a staple of the school calendar for at least a century. Yet, research shows that over the course of the summer, students from all socioeconomic groups lose ability in mathematics, and children from lower-income strata lose ability in reading, as well.⁶⁶ Other research suggests that the learning loss experienced over the summer, in fact, contributes to the achievement gap between high-poverty students and their more affluent peers.⁶⁷

To counter the ill effects of summer vacation on academic learning, many urban districts have made a concerted effort to provide learning opportunities to their students, especially struggling students, for at least some weeks during the summer months. Unlike past school district programs that often focused strictly on remediation, a number of recent efforts—like ones in [Pittsburgh](#), [Cincinnati](#), and [Dallas](#), as well as the 84 districts that participate in a program called [Freedom Schools](#)—are designed to provide students a more well-rounded experience. The [National Summer Learning Association](#) maintains that these types of programs hold promise because

*Summer presents an untapped opportunity—a time of year when youth and families seek programs that look and feel different from the traditional school year; teachers have the flexibility to be innovative and creative in their teaching and assessment; and community partners with specialized expertise in arts, recreation, sports, and youth development abound.*⁶⁸

In addition, some districts (and individual schools) have found that using school breaks in the middle of academic years offers a viable opportunity to enroll struggling students in intensive support classes. In the 2009–10 school year, Boston Public Schools, for example, developed “[Acceleration Academies](#)” at nine state-identified Turnaround

schools to adjust not only their overall schedules, but also their internal time—or the way that students and teachers spend time during the day and across the year. The most consequential shift has been a somewhat predictable weighting of time toward classes in reading and math, especially at the elementary school level. This re-balancing is a direct result of the pressure on schools to demonstrate rising student proficiency in these tested subjects. A [2008 study](#) by the Center on Education Policy found that elementary students spend, on average, 141 more minutes per week in English classes and 89 more minutes per week in math than in the days before No Child Left Behind. Yet, in the zero-sum game of school time, increases in some classes must mean decreased time in others. The largest “losers” are science and social studies (now meeting about 75 fewer minutes per week), followed by art (57 minutes per week) and physical education (40 minutes).⁷⁰

In addition to re-allocating time for core subjects and how teachers and students spend their time together, another detectable shift concerns professional development for teachers. An [analysis of Illinois districts](#) revealed, for example, that students rarely attended school the minimum number of 176 days. Rather, Illinois students, on average, attend school about 171 full days in the current 2010–2011 school year. Much of the decrease in classroom instructional time stems from those days when students are dismissed early so that teachers can meet to plan for individual classes and for school improvement.⁷¹ (See box, p. 28.) Some district administrators explain that teacher planning is essential and should not be circumscribed. Yet, because districts cannot afford to pay teachers for additional stand-alone professional development days, districts have opted instead to take time away from the official student schedule and designate more time exclusively for teacher use.

Moving Towards Proficiency-Based Education

In 1994, the [National Commission on Time and Learning](#) leveled a sharp critique of the American school system declaring that the standard school calendar is a “foundation of sand... [because] if experience, research, and common sense teach nothing else, they confirm the truism that people learn at different rates, and in different ways with different subjects. But... [t]he boundaries of student growth are defined by schedules for bells, buses, and vacations instead of standards for students and learning.”⁷² Now, nearly two decades after the Time and Learning Commission identified the dangers of prioritizing arbitrary “seat time” over genuine proficiency in core subjects, many states and districts are taking concrete steps to put in place systems that will, in effect, re-calibrate the education system by holding mastery for each individual student as the true measure of schooling.

To counter the ill effects of summer vacation on academic learning, many urban districts have made a concerted effort to provide learning opportunities for at least some weeks during the summer months.

Schools and served over 1,200 students in Grades 3 to 8 during the one-week vacations in February (for reading) and April (for math). Attending for six-hour days, students gained an equivalent of one month more of classes over the course of the five days and did so in classes with experienced teachers, specially recruited to lead these sessions.⁶⁹ In the 2010–2011 school year, roughly 3,000 students participated. [Aurora, Colorado](#), has for several years operated a similar series of intensive sessions during the first four weeks of summer.

Shifting Priorities

Over the last several years, the drive to improve educational quality and outcomes has led many

Collaborative Planning in Expanded-Time Schools

Quality teachers are the foundation of strong schools. As the [National Staff Development Council](#) explained, “Efforts to improve student achievement can succeed only by building the capacity of teachers to improve their instructional practice and the capacity of school systems to promote teacher learning.”¹ In turn, research strongly suggests that strengthening teacher capacity depends on substantive and embedded professional development, where teachers can learn together and reflect in real time on how their classroom practices impact student achievement. In most schools, however, finding the time during the typical school day for teachers to engage in the kind of multi-tiered conversations that such reflection demands is difficult. The [National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future](#) reports that teachers in the United States typically have three to five hours per week for lesson planning, but that these sessions are rarely held with colleagues.²

In schools with more time than the conventional schedule, however, teacher collaboration tends to take place frequently. A [study of high-performing charter schools](#) by scholars from the Harvard Graduate School of Education found that teachers in these charters would meet often throughout the week to review student data, to give feedback to each other on lessons, and to discuss how best to tailor instruction. Likewise, core academic teachers in the three districts with long-standing expanded-time initiatives noted (Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Volusia) meet in collaborative planning for at least an hour each week, while students attend their elective or enrichment classes. The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time (ELT) schools, as part of their performance agreements with the state, are held accountable for ensuring weekly (at least) collaborative planning time for teachers. And, compared to teachers in a comparable set of schools without more time, ELT teachers are significantly more satisfied with the amount of time they have for collaboration.³ As one teacher from a Florida elementary school noted, “I know my colleagues in other schools [without the extra hour] don’t meet very often. I don’t know how they get better without it.”

¹ Linda Darling Hammond, et al., *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*, (Dallas: National Staff Development Council, 2009), p. 7.

² National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future*, (New York: Author, 1996).

³ Amy Checkoway, et al, *Evaluation of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative Year Four Integrated Report: 2009-10* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, March 2011), p. 106.

The concept of finding alternative means to demonstrate proficiency began at the [high school level](#), and has now spread throughout K–12 education.⁷³ Aptly named “proficiency-based credit” policies currently exist in [approximately 35 states](#). These regulations allow districts to grant students credit for courses once they have demonstrated the knowledge and skills that constitute “mastery” without regard to the amount of time they have spent in that particular class. Such efforts may benefit both advanced learners—who, some fear, may grow disengaged when required to sit through content they have already mastered—and those students who might need extra time to show full understanding key content. (See box next page.) The executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, [Gene Wilhoit](#), [makes the case](#) for the potential of competency-based education by recalling his days as Commissioner of Education in Kentucky:

[W]hen we waived seat-time and began to think more broadly about what constitutes authentic evidence of learning, we unleashed individual teacher’s ingenuity to provide interventions on a very personalized basis. The option also helped district leaders implement entire new programs and services that could not have been delivered in the traditional calendar, schedule and constraints of the Carnegie unit. With implementation of the Common Core, we have an unprecedented opportunity to focus on measuring each individual student’s progress towards known goals. We are moving towards a clear vision of what success means and that vision of success is not defined by time or place.⁷⁴

Oregon's Proficiency Credit Model

In early 2008, the Oregon State Board of Education formed the [Credit for Proficiency Task Force](#) to examine the question of how the state might grant diplomas to graduates who had achieved mastery in certain subjects, but who may not have met minimum “seat time” requirements in these subjects. The task force was seeking in part to define the degree of autonomy that should be granted to local districts to develop “proficiency-based standards.” Its final report (issued in September 2008) opted to give districts the flexibility to design their own standards and assessments for proficiency, but to do so on a specified schedule and with state approval of the plan.¹ According to the report, a district’s “credit for proficiency” protocol must include:

- A definition of *student knowledge and skills* as reflected in state or other recognized standards;
- A definition of *proficiency in these standards*, where students demonstrate knowledge and skills which meet or exceed defined levels of performance that are clearly reflective of state, local, or national criteria; and
- Well-detailed *quantity and quality of evidence* necessary to clearly demonstrate proficiency in a required or elective area; evidence can include both in-class and out-of-class experience.

Since the release of this report, the Oregon Business Council went on to create the [Oregon Proficiency Project](#) that aims to put these principles into practice. The project includes piloting a model at two sites and organizing an array of professional development and producing a series of videos on how to align instruction along a proficiency model.²

Some districts have recognized that having such a system in place will not only benefit student learning by expanding their educational opportunities, but also can do so at little to no additional cost because they take advantage of community resources. The [Klamath Falls City School District](#), for example, will allow students to take internships in local businesses starting in fall 2011. First, students will receive in-school training and then, in cooperation with volunteer work mentors in local businesses and organizations, students will complete a 25-hour experience over a five-week period. The work experience is structured by clear guidelines and exit expectations and intended to bridge connections between in-school learning and professional application of knowledge.³ The idea of demonstrating proficiency in contexts outside of school has the potential to re-cast the meaning of education. As a national report on [competency-based approaches](#) explains, “Competency-based approaches, in which learning topics are explicitly shared with students and parents, create a formal mechanism to align community resources around student success.”⁴

¹ *Report of the Credit for Proficiency Task Force* (Portland: Oregon Department of Education, September 2008).

² The Oregon Proficiency Project offers materials, including videos, available at the Center for Educational Leadership at www.k-12leadership.org/professional-development/proficiency-project.

³ Paul Hillyer, “City Schools Seeks Partners in Work Experience Program,” *Herald and News*, 5 February 2011.

⁴ Chris Sturgis and Susan Patrick, *When Success Is the Only Option: Designing Competency-Based Pathways for Next Generation Learning* (Vienna, Virg.: International Association for K-12 Online Learning, 2010), p. 3.



VI. Cost-Effective Strategies to Expand Time

While it is true that adding minutes to the school day or days to the year does usually require additional resources, many districts are finding ways to fund an expanded schedule at a considerably lower proportional rate than the increase in time.

Not only do the marginal costs of adding time tend to be much lower than the fixed costs of operating schools, other pedagogical and institutional arrangements can also act to add significant learning time at relatively low cost. These cost efficiencies take several forms, including staggered teacher schedules, employing lower-cost instructors, and using technology as a teaching tool. (See box, pp. 32-33.)

Staggered schedules follow two basic patterns. The most promising strategy for reducing the cost of additional time entails staggering teacher work schedules on an annual basis. [Brooklyn Generation School](#) in Brooklyn, New York, serves as a primary model for this strategy. With a school calendar of 200 days for students, every teacher at the school works only 180 days, in keeping with the New York City teachers' contract. The school is able to maintain this

arrangement through creative use of staffing across the school year, including enrolling students at off-campus internships and using a different set of specialist instructors to deliver focused mini-courses called “Intensives.”⁷⁵ Such a staffing model has not yet been scaled to additional schools, but the non-profit operator, Generation Schools Network, is working with schools in both New York City and Colorado to explore ways to replicate this program, with plans to have five to seven more schools operational within a few years.

Another model of staggering teacher schedules revolves around the creation of two shifts of teachers on a daily basis. The Superintendent’s School Improvement District in Buffalo, New York—a comprehensive school improvement initiative that operated from 2007 through 2011, but was phased out with a reduction in state funding—contained 16 schools, all of which added an hour of daily instruction. Instead of having teachers work the longer 7.5-hour day, [Buffalo developed a system](#) whereby the teaching corps in each school would be divided in two. The early shift started around 7:50 a.m. and finished at 2:40 p.m., while the late group started at 8:50 a.m. and ended at 3:40 p.m. Each school had the autonomy to manage its own staffing arrangements. To cover the first and last hours of the day when the teaching staff was not at full capacity, the district hired paraprofessionals to supervise certain classes and other activities (e.g., breakfast). This [staffing plan](#) was proposed by the union and agreed to by district administration.⁷⁶

Other schools have found that using non-certificated instructors for certain classes and programming can offer new supports to students, often at reduced costs. The [Achievable Dream Academy](#), a district school in Newport News, Virginia, features an eight-hour school day, which includes one hour of individualized or small-group tutoring for about 20 percent of the student body. For this part of the educational program, the school relies on retired teachers, student teachers, and work-study students to serve as tutors, paying them less than half the hourly rate of school-day teachers. Each tutor leads approximately 10 sessions per week.⁷⁷ The [Rocketship Education](#) schools in northern California, meanwhile, rely on tutors to assist students in their daily work with computer learning programs. The computer-based learning, which is interactive, engaging, and automatically targeted to each student’s learning needs, acts as a supplement to the more traditional classrooms and is, in turn, more lightly staffed.⁷⁸ Chicago Public Schools began a program at 15 elementary schools in fall 2010 that also relies on technology to furnish instruction. A combination of teachers and community partners oversees the program. The [Additional Learning Opportunities Initiative](#) delivers 90 additional minutes per day in reading and math to approximately 6,000 students.⁷⁹

Even the more straightforward policy of directly funding expanded-time schools may not be as expensive as imagined. The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative noted above, for example, distributes grants of \$1,300 per student in order to support 300 additional school hours. This formula works out to \$4.33 per student hour, compared to the per hour [cost of the traditional school year](#), which averages over \$11.00 per student in the state.⁸⁰ This relatively low per-pupil rate for 300 additional hours is made possible by leveraging fixed administrative and operational costs. In contrast to the ELT model, the federal government’s [Supplemental Education Services](#), a Title I program that supports afterschool tutoring for academically struggling students, offers stipends (in Massachusetts) of an average of around \$1,200 per student. Though there is a range of hours for tutoring services, the average service time of about 45 hours (36 sessions of about 75 minutes each) translates to roughly \$25 per student hour for the additional instructional time.⁸¹



Cost-Effective Strategies to Expand School Time

Many districts and schools have discovered ways to fund an expanded schedule at a cost that is at a considerably lower proportional rate than the increase in time. Some of these models are presented below:

	Staggered Staff Schedules (Annual)	Staggered Staff Schedules (Daily)
Where It's Working	<p>Brooklyn Generation School (Brooklyn, NY)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers work 180 days, while students attend 200 days Students participate in internships and intensive courses during one-month-long intersession; regular teachers off this month 90 percent of staff are teachers; no athletic director or guidance counselors 	<p>Superintendent's School Improvement District (Buffalo, NY)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers work approximately one hour less than students attend school; teachers work on early and late shifts to cover the full day Paraprofessionals fill in staffing gaps in first and last hour of the student day
How Savings Are Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are paid conventional contracted rate and work conventional number of days, while students attend more school days than the conventional schedule Teachers take on some administrative tasks to reduce total number of administrators hired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About half of the teachers work the first six hours of a seven-hour student day, while the other half arrive at school an hour into the school day and work until the final bell Additional staff needed to cover non-fully staffed hours/days (i.e., first and last hour of student day) paid at lower rate

Technology as a Teaching Tool	Partnerships	School-Level Autonomy
<p>Rocketship Education (San Jose, CA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily classes in “Learning Lab,” guided by tutors Learning lab allows the school to operate fewer classrooms and, thus, hire fewer teachers <p>Additional Learning Opportunities (Chicago, IL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90 minutes per day additional time in reading and math sessions Overseen by teachers and community partner staff 	<p>Edwards Middle School/ Citizen Schools (Charlestown, MA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit provider, Citizen Schools, operates academic leagues and apprenticeships for all 6th graders students <p>Denver School of Science and Technology (Denver, CO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 11th graders participate in internships in science and technology fields; matched with a volunteer mentor at a business or other professional setting 	<p>Achievable Dream Academy (Newport News, VA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Features 8-hour day, small staff-to-student ratio Formed through partnership between Newport News Public Schools, the City of Newport News, and the local business community District gives school flexibility to hire teachers outside collective bargaining agreement; teachers paid stipend for additional hours, but non-proportional to time worked <p>Robert Treat Academy Charter School (Newark, NJ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have longer day (7 hours) and longer year (205 days) than surrounding schools, but teachers not paid proportionally more based on time Average class size is 25 (vs. 19 in NJ) Teachers take on multiple roles (e.g., instruction and administrative tasks) so need to hire fewer staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology is used as a learning tool for part of the day, methodically tracking students’ individual progress and requiring fewer teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-based organizations (with lower-paid staff) provide instruction or programming to students as part of the extended schedule Partners bring own resources and grant monies to cover some portion of expanded programming costs Internships (during school and after school hours) provided by volunteer professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers hired to work a “professional day” (8 hours) and paid competitive wages, but not necessarily more than peers in standard district schools Schools operate on a more flexible staffing model in order to reduce total number of staff hired (e.g., each teacher takes on some administrative responsibilities in place of hiring asst. principal)

In today's economic climate, our nation's schools face enormous challenges. As such, many districts are forced to rely on stopgap measures like furloughs and hiring freezes just to balance budgets. Yet, these temporary savings could actually be short-sighted. As [Bill Gates told a gathering](#) of chief state school officers in November 2010,

... when you apply short-term fixes to long-term problems, you can do more harm than good. Furloughs are a prime example. That's just saving money by closing schools. It's quitting on the kids. And while it saves money this year, it leaves the baseline budget in place—so it makes next year's budget gap even bigger.

While traversing these rough fiscal waters, schools confront an even larger undertaking—lifting the proficiency of millions of student to a level where they can become the productive workers and citizens of tomorrow. The only way to meet this challenge is to fundamentally transform schools that for years have lacked the ability to generate strong academic gains, especially among disadvantaged students. Indeed, there seems little doubt that improving these schools is of paramount importance for our collective future. And this wrinkle puts districts and states in a double bind. As Gates explained, “You can't improve schools without reforms. You can't fund reforms without money.” So, what is the solution? Gates supplies a one-word answer: “Innovation.”⁸²

In the case of expanded-time schools, this charge from Gates resonates. Districts and schools that have sought to add learning time have found that they must do so with a readiness to innovate. Not only do they need to discover new ways to leverage resources to support additional time, districts and schools also must be creative in harnessing the additional time itself to optimize its impact on teaching and learning. So, in this period of rapid and substantial transformation in American schooling, expanded-time schools represent both a focal point of innovation and the leading edge of reforms that promise to bring about real and lasting improvement in education.





VII. Recommendations

There is no doubt that the landscape of American education is undergoing considerable change. From the flurry of new policies and programs generated by the Obama administration and Congress to the many innovations and compromises that are taking shape daily at the local level, schooling in this country promises to look quite different in the coming years.

Perhaps nowhere is the educational environment more in flux than it is in the arena that had been, over the last few generations, one of the staples of American public schools: the traditional school calendar. With over a thousand schools operating with expanded hours and days, and an untold number of others reducing theirs, the standard is very quickly becoming de-standardized. For this reason, the need to better track and understand the

complex nexus of time and learning has become more pressing than ever. Moreover, with increased pressure to prepare students to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy, policymakers can capitalize on opportunities to encourage robust models for expanding time and for using time more effectively.

Following is a series of recommendations for policymakers at the three key levels (federal, state, and district), as well as for researchers. These are preceded by three recommendations with relevance for all.

Overarching Recommendations

1. Align resources with the diverse needs of students—As the [National Time and Learning Commission](#) observed almost two decades ago, the concept of having a standard amount of time in which all students, regardless of their backgrounds and circumstances, can reach high standards of learning, is fundamentally flawed. Policymakers and educators alike must consider that different populations need different amounts of time to achieve proficiency and that this variation must be factored into the education system in matters ranging from determining funding formulas (e.g., adjusted funding to accommodate expanded time for high-poverty populations) to designing learning programs (e.g., advancement based on mastery, rather than “seat time”).

2. Highlight successful school models—Many educators and policymakers are unaware of expanded school time models and lack the know-how to transition to expanded time from a standard schedule. This unfamiliarity leads many to conclude that “it can’t be done.” Yet, there are already many solid examples of how expanded time accelerates efforts to strengthen the teaching and learning process. Documenting models will broaden understanding of how these schools have transformed themselves by leveraging the power of time—and done so in cost-effective ways—and might lead others to try as well.

3. Incentivize expanded time by linking it to autonomy—In order to encourage more schools to expand time, policymakers need to include this strategy as part of a package of whole-school reforms that empowers school leaders with staffing and budget authority.

For Federal Policymakers

1. Prioritize expanded time in ESEA reauthorization—As Congress moves forward to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, policymakers should look to the [Time for Innovation Matters in Education \(TIME\) Act](#) to provide a comprehensive expanded learning time framework for the revised law. The TIME Act is valuable because it identifies the principal programmatic elements that are needed to ensure that time is added strategically and in a way that is most likely to leverage whole school improvement, with more time for: core academics, teacher collaboration, and engaged learning through expanded enrichment programming. In addition ESEA reauthorization should:

a. Strengthen the School Improvement Grant (SIG) Program to Allow Schools More Time to Implement Reforms—The revamped School Improvement Grant program ([Title I, Sec. 1003](#)) requires that schools increase learning time (for the “Turnaround” or “Transformation” models) alongside a number of other multi-part educational strategies. To date, many SIG grantees have struggled to increase learning time as they simultaneously work to implement other reforms and without the benefit of a planning period. The option of providing schools an additional two years of funding beyond the first three (if the school is making progress) would furnish low-performing schools the time necessary to carefully implement a redesigned and expanded school day. Moreover, the requirement to “increase learning time” should be strengthened to mandate a minimum of 300 additional hours for all students in a re-designed school.



Governor Deval Patrick at Jacob Hiatt School, Worcester, MA

b. Support proposals to strengthen the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC) program—As President Obama and the Senate Appropriations Committee have proposed, the CLC program, which is currently supporting voluntary out-of-school programs exclusively ([as detailed in Title IV](#)), should take a broader view of expanded learning time to include more school time for *all* enrolled students in a particular school. Specifically, a revised version of the program should give local education leaders the flexibility to choose the strategy that best meets the needs of their students—after-school and summer programming; an expansion of the school day, week, or year; or a combination of these strategies.

c. **Allow school districts with robust plans to use expanded time as an alternative to the current Supplemental Education Services (SES) model**—Supplemental Education Services provides funding that supports more learning time (typically in the form of tutoring) to individual students who attend struggling schools, but [reviews of the program](#) have shown a lack of efficacy, in part because the tutoring is not well-aligned with in-school curricula and methods. Further, while SES funding offers a remedy to individual students, it does nothing to improve the school overall, and, because participation in SES tutoring is voluntary, not all children who need extra help receive it. Allowing districts the flexibility to direct SES funding toward expanded academic support for all students in a school (via a longer school day and/or year) holds the potential for broader and more enduring impact.

d. **Link funding to proven methods to improve teaching**—As states and districts focus intently on how to improve teacher effectiveness ([the purpose of Title II](#)), the federal government should steer policymakers and educators toward practices that work. One key practice is the dedication of time during the regular school day for teacher collaboration and embedded professional development, along with accountability measures to help insure that these sessions are of high quality and deliver their intended impact.

e. **Close the “comparability loophole” in Title I funding**—Title I is the federal government’s chief means to provide schools serving high concentrations of children in poverty additional resources so that schools in different communities might be more equalized. Yet, a little-known “[comparability loophole](#)” actually acts to widen, rather than narrow, gaps between high-poverty schools and those that are more affluent. By closing this loophole, Congress could correct the current unbalanced funding and would, in turn, provide schools serving large proportions of disadvantaged students the additional resources they need to boost their educational program with high-impact practices, which could include expanded time.

2. **Support high-quality technical assistance for school reform efforts**—For expanded time to deliver maximal impact, schools and individual teachers must not only provide students more time on task, they must also use time throughout the day and year in ways that optimize learning. Achieving such optimal time use is a complex endeavor, demanding that practitioners analyze and reconfigure educational programs to best meet student needs and that they develop instructional practices that make the most of classroom time.

Yet, [a survey of districts](#) conducted in 2010 found that only a minority had any experience with (or even knowledge of) school reform efforts that involve, among other significant reforms, increased learning time. Thus, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) should prioritize support for schools and districts to partner with high-quality technical assistance organizations and individual experts in work involving school transformation and the expansion and re-design of learning time.



KIPP NYC Collegiate, New York, NY

3. **Prioritize research that focuses on time**—As Congress reauthorizes the [Education Sciences Reform Act](#), the law that funds the [Institute for Education Sciences \(IES\)](#), it should seek to set policies that would encourage researchers to delve more deeply into questions around expanded time in practice and in the connection between time and learning. These include:

a. **Expand the categories of research that account for time use in schools**—In its [current research guide](#), IES highlights the need to better understand the implementation and impact of expanded time within its “Improving Education Systems” strand. Yet, there are additional aspects of research that also might contribute to our understanding of how time works within schools and the learning process, such as the “Effective Teachers and Effective Teaching” and “Cognition and Student Learning” strands.

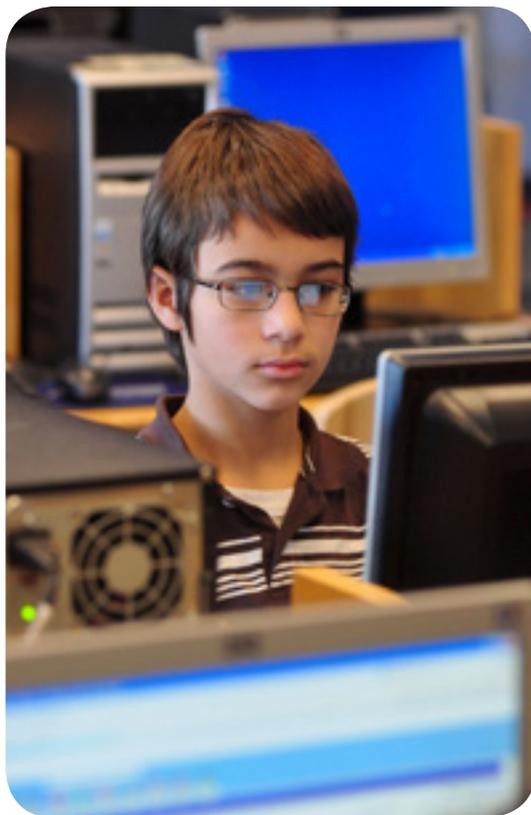
b. **Feature expanded time as one model of “promising practices”**—The number of schools that rely on an expanded schedule to achieve their educational goals is growing every year and, yet, many policymakers and practitioners still are relatively uninformed about them. Because expanded time holds great promise to accelerate school reform efforts, USED should build out its efforts to feature such models

within its “[Doing What Works](#)” clearinghouse of research-based promising practices and in other publications and communication venues.

c. Expand collection of time data at the school and district levels—Through the [Early Childhood Longitudinal Study \(ECLS-K\)](#), the federal government has generated a significant dataset that includes both data on student outcomes and on time use. The [Schools and Staffing Survey](#), meanwhile, collects data on time use in schools at certain grade levels from a representative sample of schools. The USED should encourage use of these datasets, as much as they might be applied, to conduct analyses in both how students use time and how schools structure their instructional time. More importantly, however, the nation still lacks a comprehensive dataset on instructional time allocation in schools. The USED has an opportunity to remedy this deficiency by including new data fields on operational and instructional time in the [Common Core of Data](#), the central repository of basic data for every public school and school district in the country.

For State Policymakers

1. Resist calls to cut school time—In the midst of severe budget crises, state leaders are looking for options to cut education costs. Reducing the number of instructional days (and thereby furloughing teachers) has been on the table,



but such an approach is shortsighted, for it can negatively impact student achievement.

2. Grant greater flexibility to districts to innovate—As they look for ways to reduce the intense financial burdens many of their districts are confronting, a number of states have passed new laws allowing for local flexibility over financing and staffing schools and in developing their educational programs. Encouraging fresh approaches to meeting the needs of children—much as Delaware is trying now with its “[Partnership Zone](#)” schools, Hawaii with the “[Zone of Innovation](#),” and [Massachusetts](#) and [Colorado](#) with their “[Innovation Schools](#)”—will likely result in creative uses of staff, technology, and partners to expand time for students in cost-effective ways.

3. Provide clear guidance to local districts on using federal monies to expand learning time—States that receive funds through Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants should provide clear guidelines to local districts aimed at the highest-quality implementation of increased learning time, including adding substantially more learning hours for all students in targeted schools and focusing more time in core academics and teacher collaboration.

4. Consider instructional time as a factor in implementing the new Common Core standards—As many states take on the challenge of adapting to the more rigorous standards defined through the Common Core, implementation plans must take into consideration how much time schools—especially those serving high-poverty children—will need to teach more demanding curricula.

5. Encourage innovation through the establishment of more charter and charter-like schools—Unbound by standing policies related to length of school days and years and staffing models, charter schools often will take advantage of the ability to operate on an expanded schedule and, in turn, provide students the extra time they need to prepare for college and careers.

6. Form a commission to explore policy and funding options for expanded time—States like [Colorado](#), [Oklahoma](#), and [Rhode Island](#) have found that a high-level state commission can offer the “creative space” in which to develop strategic approaches to increasing the number of expanded-time schools and the instruments through which these schools can serve as models for leveraging more time to generate meaningful education reform.

7. Create competitive grant programs to support expanded learning time—Draw upon the [Massachusetts example](#) and set aside funds to create a state-managed initiative that will prompt schools to redesign and expand their school

schedule to include more academics, enrichment, and teacher collaboration. As Massachusetts has discovered, these schools can become “proof points” that offer examples of effective time use and then spur others to innovate.

8. Collect operational and instructional time data from districts—Of the over 30 countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States is one of only a handful that **do not report school time** for the simple reason that such data are not collected from districts or schools. States could require such information to be submitted to their departments of education so that school time at the local level can be better monitored and differences in time use can be studied.

For District Policymakers

1. Document in-district successes—Some districts have expanded-time schools operating right now, but other traditional-schedule schools in the district are unfamiliar with how their expanded-time neighbors work and the impact they might have. Charting successful implementations close to home might help peers in traditional schools to overcome



Kuss Middle School, Fall River, MA

the all-too-common psychological hurdle of thinking that redesigning a school on an expanded schedule is too difficult.

2. Explore cost-effective models to provide more school time—Districts can take advantage of already-proven models of building more time in to schools for relatively low cost—including staggering teacher schedules, using technology as a tool to support learning, and building partnerships with institutions that can bring resources to schools (e.g., higher education

institutions, cultural agencies, community-based organizations, and businesses) to create expanded learning opportunities.

3. Blend funding sources to expand school time—Even in harnessing cost-effective models, expanded time may require additional resources. Given the funds flowing from the federal government to support increased learning time and the growing interest on the part of the philanthropic community in this strategy, districts may be able to combine sources to support sustainable models of expanded-time schools. Although blended funding may require federal or state waivers, policymakers are increasingly accepting of using federal and state funds for innovations that result in improved student outcomes.

4. Pilot expanded-time initiatives—To move toward a district-wide school schedule that adds significant time to the day and/or year, districts might begin by testing out the expanded-time approach in a subset of schools, especially those that are in need of significant improvement. Districts might also initiate smaller district-wide policy shifts related to time, such as utilizing vacations to increase learning time, to introduce publicly the concept that school time should be flexible and modified to best support student learning.

For Researchers

1. Evaluate the educational implications of more time—Research has begun to identify increased time as a key factor in enabling schools serving high-poverty students to bring about meaningful educational gains, but significant questions remain. We still lack sufficient answers to fundamental matters like: (a) How much time will it take for various student populations to acquire the skills and knowledge they will need for college and the workforce? (b) What are the time implications of adopting more demanding standards (e.g., the Common Core)? (c) What are the educational and financial tradeoffs of a longer day versus a longer year? and (d) Other than tracking performance on standardized assessments, how else can we assess the impact of more time on student learning and development?

2. Assess the cost implications of various forms of expanded time—While expanded time can require additional resources, there are also many leverage points where costs might be moderated or eliminated. Experts in school finance should document and analyze current models and explore other opportunities. Additionally, researchers should catalog the costs and benefits of money spent on expanded time, so policymakers can better understand the implications for return on investment.

3. Track the implementation of School Improvement Grants—As the largest single federal program requiring Increased Learning Time in schools, the SIG program stands to have a large impact on over 1,000 schools in the next three years. Yet, absent a detailed assessment of the implementation of ILT at the school level, it will be difficult to know how the introduction of more time relates to learning outcomes and, more broadly, what the full impact of this federal initiative to change the school calendar on a large scale has been.



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Appendix : State Policies on Instructional Time

In most states, instructional time requirements are established in state law and regulation. States vary on whether or not public schools are required to have a minimum number of instructional days per year, instructional hours per year and/or instructional hours in the school day. While most states require a minimum threshold of 180 days per year, state minimums range from 160 days per year in Colorado to 186 days (for grades K-11) in Kansas. States vary even more in the thresholds they set for school day length. The shortest allowable number of hours for a school day falls between 5.5 and 6.5 hours, with variation by grade level. As shown in the table below, in many states public schools are subject to multiple time-related requirements. For example, most states require a minimum number of hours in the school day *and* either a minimum requirement for instructional days *or* hours in the school year. The information provided in the table below for instructional days/year and instructional hours/year is an updated version of a June 2008 Education Commission of the States publication.¹

State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year	Minimum Instructional Hours/Year	Minimum Hours/Day
Alabama ²	180 days	N/A	6 hours
Alaska ³	170 days	OR K-3: 740 hours 4-12: 900 hours	1-3: 4 hours 4-12: 5 hours
Arizona ⁴	180 days	AND K: 356 hours 1-3: 712 hours 4-6: 890 hours 7-8: 1000 hours	4 hours
Arkansas ⁵	178 days	N/A	6 hours/day OR 30 hours/week
California ⁶	175/180 days	AND K: 600 hours 1-3: 840 hours 4-8: 900 hours 9-12: 1080 hours	K: 3 hours 1-3: 3.83 hours 4-12: 4 hours
Colorado ⁷	160 days	AND K: 435 or 870 hours 1-5: 968 hours 6-12: 1056 hours	N/A

¹ The June 2008 Education Commission of the States publication can be found here: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/78/24/7824.pdf>. Each state's statutes and regulations referenced in that document were checked and updated when necessary.

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³ Alaska 2010 Statutes 14.03.030(3), 14.03.040

⁴ House Bill 2725, p. 54, 49th legislature, 2010

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⁶ California Code Education Sections 41420(b), 46200, 46112, 46113, 46117, 46141, 46201(a)

⁷ Colorado Revised Statutes Section 22-32-109, effective 2001

State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year	Minimum Instructional Hours/Year	Minimum Hours/Day
Connecticut ⁸	180 days	AND K: 450 or 900 hours 1-12: 900 hours	AND 5 hours /day
Delaware ⁹	N/A	K: 1060 hours 1-11: 1060 hours 12: 1032 hours	K-12: Determined by district, as long as at least 31.5 hours/week
District of Columbia ¹⁰	178 days	N/A	1-12: 6 hours (including lunch and recess)
Florida ¹¹	180 days	OR K-3: 720 hours 4-12: 900 hours	5 hours
Georgia ¹²	180 days	OR K-3: 810 hours 4-5: 900 hours 6-12: 990 hours	K-3: 4.5 hours 4-5: 5 hours 6-12: 5.5 hours
Hawaii ¹³	180 days	AND K-6: 915 hours 7-12: 990 hours	K-5: 6 hours 6-12: 6.5 hours
Idaho ¹⁴	N/A	K: 450 hours 1-3: 810 hours 4-8: 900 hours 9-12: 990 hours (including 22 hours for staff development)	N/A
Illinois ¹⁵	176 days	N/A	K-1: 4 hours 2-12: 5 hours
Indiana ¹⁶	180 days	N/A	1-6: 5 hours 7-12: 6 hours
Iowa ¹⁷	180 days	N/A	1-12: 5.5 hours/day OR 27.5 hours/week
Kansas ¹⁸	K-11: 186 days 12: 181 days	OR K: 465 hours 1-11: 1116 hours 12: 1086 hours	N/A

⁸ Connecticut General Statutes § 10-16, effective 1999

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¹⁷ Iowa Code chapter 279.10

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State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year	Minimum Instructional Hours/Year	Minimum Hours/Day
Kentucky ¹⁹	177 days	AND 1,062 hours	6 hours
Louisiana ²⁰	177 days	AND 1,062 hours	6 hours (excluding recess)
Maine ²¹	175 days	N/A	N/A
Maryland ²²	180 days	AND 1080 hours	6 hours
Massachusetts ²³	180 days	AND K: 425 hours 1-5: 900 hours 6-12: 990 hours	N/A
Michigan ²⁴	165 days Effective in the 2012-13 School Year: 170 days	1098 hours	N/A
Minnesota	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mississippi ²⁵	180 days	N/A	5.5 hours (mandatory total of 27.5 hours/wk)
Missouri ²⁶	174 days for 5 day week 142 days for 4 day week	AND 1044 hours	3 hours for 5 day week 4 hours for 4 day week
Montana ²⁷	N/A	Half-day K: 360 hours K-3: 720 hours 4-12: 1080 hours	N/A
Nebraska ²⁸	N/A	K: 400 hours 1-8: 1032 hours 9-12: 1080 hours	N/A
Nevada ²⁹	180 days	N/A	K: 2 hours 1-2: 4 hours 3-6: 5 hours 7-12: 5.5 hours (all, including recess and time between lessons, but not lunch)

¹⁹ Kentucky House Bill 406 effective 2006

²⁰ Louisiana Code 17:154.1, effective 2006

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²⁸ Nebraska Revised Statutes, 79-211/212, 1996

²⁹ Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 387.131, 388.090 effective Feb 2010

State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year	Minimum Instructional Hours/Year	Minimum Hours/Day
New Hampshire ³⁰	180 days	OR 1-5: 945 hours 6-12: 990 hours	K-5: 5.25 hours 6-8: 5.5 hours
New Jersey ³¹	180 days	N/A	4 hours (excluding lunch and recess)
New Mexico ³²	180 days	OR K: 450 or 990 hours 1-6: 990 hours 7-12: 1080 hours	OR K: 2.5 OR 5.5 hours 1-6: 5.5 hours 7-12: 6 hours
New York ³³	180 days	N/A	AND K: 2.5 OR 5 hours 1-6: 5 hours 7-12: 5.5 hours
North Carolina ³⁴	180 days	AND 1000 hours	5.5 hours
North Dakota ³⁵	181 days Effective in the 2011-12 School Year: 182 days	Any reconfigured school year must include at least: K-8: 951.5 hours 9-12: 1038 hours	K-6: 5.5 hours 7-12: 6 hours
Ohio ³⁶	182 days	Effective in the 2011-12 School Year: 910 hours	1-6: 5 hours (including 2 15-min recesses) 7-12: 5 hours (excluding lunch and recess)
Oklahoma ³⁷	180 days	OR 1-6: 900 hours 7-12: 1080 hours (includes 6 hours/semester for parent-teacher conferences)	6 hours
Oregon ³⁸	N/A	K: 405 hours 1-3: 810 hours 4-8: 900 hours 9-12: 990 hours	N/A

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³¹ New Jersey Annotated Statutes § 18A:7F-9, effective 1996

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³³ New York Code EDN Title 4 Article 65 Part 1 3201

³⁴ North Carolina General Statute § 115C 84.2, effective 2005

³⁵ North Dakota Century Code Section 15.1-06-04, 2009-2010

³⁶ Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.48, up-to-date as of legislative session 2009

³⁷ Oklahoma Statutes 70 O.S. 1-109, effective 2009

³⁸ Oregon Administrative Rule 581-022-1620, effective 2008

State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year	Minimum Instructional Hours/Year	Minimum Hours/Day
Pennsylvania ³⁹	180 days	OR K: 450 hours 1-6: 900 hours 7-12: 990 hours	K: 2.5 hours 1-8: 5 hours 9-12: 5.5 hours
Rhode Island ⁴⁰	180 days	N/A	K: 2.75 hours 1-6: 5.5 hours 7-12: 5.5 hours (excluding recess and lunch)
South Carolina ⁴¹	180 days	N/A	6 hours (secondary schools: excluding lunch elementary schools: including lunch)
South Dakota ⁴²	N/A	K: 437.5 hours 1-3: 875 hours 4-12: 962.5 hours	N/A
Tennessee ⁴³	180 days	N/A	6.5 hours
Texas ⁴⁴	180 days	N/A	7 hours (including recess and break hours)
Utah ⁴⁵	180 days	AND K: 450 hours 1: 810 hours 2-12: 990 hours	N/A
Vermont ⁴⁶	175 days	N/A	K: 2 hours or 10 hours/week 1-2: 4 hours or 20 hours/week 3-12: 5.5 hours or 27.5 hours/week

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⁴⁰ Rhode Island General Laws 16-2-2, effective 2001

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⁴⁴ Texas Education Code Title 2 Subtitle E Chapter 25 Subchapter A Sec. 25.081, effective 2003

⁴⁵ Utah Administrative Code R277-419-3, effective January 10, 2011

⁴⁶ Vermont Statutes 16 VSA §1071, effective 1999

State	Minimum Instructional Days/Year	Minimum Instructional Hours/Year	Minimum Hours/Day
Virginia ⁴⁷	180 days	OR K: 540 hours 1-12: 990 hours	5.5 hours
Washington ⁴⁸	180 days	AND K: 450 hours 1-12 1000 hours Effective September 2011: K: 450 hours 1-6 1000 hours 7-12 1080 hours	N/A
West Virginia ⁴⁹	180 days	N/A	5.5 hours (including extra-curriculars and co-curriculars)
Wisconsin ⁵⁰	180 days	AND K: 437 hours 1-6: 1050 hours 7-12: 1137 hours	N/A
Wyoming ⁵¹	175 days Effective July 1, 2011: 180 days	Or equivalent hours	N/A

⁴⁷ Code of Virginia § 22.1-98, effective 2006

⁴⁸ Washington State Legislature RCW 28A.150.220, effective 2009

⁴⁹ West Virginia Code §18-5-45 b(3), effective 2010

⁵⁰ Wisconsin Code 121.02(1)(f)2, effective 2010

⁵¹ Wyoming HB 0027 effective July 1, 2011



National Center on Time & Learning

The National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) is dedicated to expanding learning time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education. Through research, public policy and technical assistance, we support national, state and local initiatives that add significantly more school time to help children meet the demands of the 21st century.

Education Commission of the States

The mission of the Education Commission of the States is to help states develop effective policy and practice for public education by providing data, research, analysis and leadership, as well as by facilitating collaboration, the exchange of ideas among the states and long-range strategic thinking.

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p. 4-Mary Beth Hiatt

p. 13-Jessica Rinaldi

p. 19, 38-Ethan Pines

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Printed copies of the executive summary can be obtained by calling (617) 723-6747.

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