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Linked Learning

Using Learning Time Creatively to Prepare Students for College and Career

By Monica R. Almond and Tiffany D. Miller October 2014

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Introduction and summary

American public education is in a constant state of experimentation, with new waves of reforms and education initiatives unveiled routinely—many recycled and some reinvented. Yet few are truly innovative. The newest and most promising reform thus far are the Common Core State Standards, which are rigorous standards in English language arts and mathematics implemented in elementary through high school.[1] These standards require new approaches to teaching and learning that ensure all students are adequately prepared for postsecondary education and careers without the need for remediation.

New standards certainly offer new challenges; but they also provide new opportunities to fundamentally change the American public education system. This can be especially transformative for traditionally underserved students who historically have been ill prepared for life after high school, as evidenced by student achievement data for these students. The 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that only 26 percent of the nation's 12th-grade students are proficient or advanced in mathematics, and only 38 percent are proficient or advanced in reading. For African American and Hispanic students, the numbers are even more dismal: African American students scored the lowest of all subgroups at 7 percent proficiency in math and 16 percent in reading, while Hispanic students scored 12 percent in math and 23 percent in reading.[2] These data are not only disheartening but also signify the incredibly challenging task of ensuring that student success is at the center of every reform initiative and policy decision going forward.

A California-led initiative called Linked Learning offers a promising systemic approach to reform that is designed to address these challenges and has been touted as a suitable complement to implementing the Common Core State Standards.[3] As this report will describe, the Linked Learning approach includes multiple elements that provide high school students with a rigorous academic core and hands-on real world learning experiences that prepare students for both college and careers. As we will explain below, high school reform strategies such as Linked Learning require the intentional and strategic use of time to accomplish ambitious goals that result in positive outcomes for students who are traditionally underserved.

This report highlights the efforts of high schools implementing multiple Linked Learning pathways in the Los Angeles Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, Porterville Unified School District, and Sacramento Unified School District. Each of these pathways has reconfigured the use of time in order to provide students with a more effective learning experience. Building on the lessons learned from these districts, as well as our collective expertise in high school reform and high-quality increased learning time, the Center for American Progress and the Alliance for Excellent Education make the following recommendations, which are explained in greater detail at the end of this report:

- Districts should give schools the flexibility to redesign their master schedules so that teachers and students have the necessary time to implement effective approaches to high school reform such as Linked Learning.

- Learning from the California experience, states should enact high school reform policy to provide effective college and career pathways for students.

- The reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, specifically Title II, Part A should clearly articulate that funds may be used for common planning time and professional development between career and technical education, or CTE, and academic teachers.

- Congress should increase funding and flexibility for 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

- Congress should fund the Obama administration's proposal for a high school redesign program that includes support for the more strategic use of time.

- The U.S. Department of Education should increase resources and technical support to ensure high-quality implementation of increased learning time in School Improvement Grant schools.

- States should reform funding policies, whether through general funds or categorical programs, to permit and incentivize schools to more creatively use time.

What is the Linked Learning approach?

Implemented at the high school level, Linked Learning is a blend of core academic content with technical education and real-world applications. Linked Learning brings together both college and career preparation to ensure that students have a suite of complementary skills that will set them up for success in any postsecondary endeavor. There are four integrated elements that make up the Linked Learning approach:

- A rigorous academic core with the goal of preparing students for postsecondary education and employment without the need for remediation
- A technical core of three or more courses that help students gain the knowledge and skills needed for the workplace
- A series of work-based learning opportunities that begin with mentoring or job shadowing and evolve into internships or apprenticeships
- Student support services such as counseling and supplemental instruction that help students master advanced academic and technical content

California's Linked Learning approach was implemented in 2008 in response to the fact that nearly one-third of underrepresented students of color were not graduating high school in four years.[4] Research has found that students participating in a Linked Learning pathway—subsequently referred to as "pathway students"[5] —are earning more credits toward graduation,[6] graduating at higher rates, and enrolling in colleges at higher rates than their peers.[7]

The Linked Learning approach requires students and educators to perform a myriad of tasks that do not neatly fit within the confines of a traditional school day. To realize the full potential of Linked Learning, many districts and schools are using time more creatively and expanding learning time to provide students with the full array of college- and career-ready opportunities embedded within the approach.

Why increased learning time?

The shift to increased learning time[8] in U.S. public schools is already underway: More than 1,500 schools have significantly lengthened their school day, week, or year.[9] Many schools have made the wise decision to significantly lengthen the school day, as there is growing research suggesting that more time in school can increase student achievement, particularly for students who attend high-poverty underperforming schools.[10] A meta-analysis of the effects of longer school days or years on achievement found that adding time to the school day or year was associated with improved student outcomes, noting stronger effects for schools serving large populations of traditionally underserved students.[11]

To be clear, more time in school alone will not automatically guarantee a rise in student achievement. As noted in a recent industry report on school turnaround, successful expanded learning-time schools—which represent a way of increasing learning time and opportunities for students—are not simply "adding time to compensate for what they lack: they are integrating time into an overall model for successful teaching and learning."[12]

Some Linked Learning high schools lengthen the school day and year and use time before school, after school, and during the summer to provide more learning time for students and teachers. For some high-poverty schools, however, significantly lengthening the school day is not an option. In these cases, schools should look at using existing time more effectively. Many high schools implementing the Linked Learning approach work within the existing structure of the school day to partner with community-based organizations and local businesses and colleges to provide students with relevant, real-world experiences within the traditional school day.

Linked Learning and the effective use of time during a traditional school day

Some schools implementing the Linked Learning approach are incorporating multiple learning elements within the parameters of traditional scheduling. Research suggests that the strongest Linked Learning pathways break down barriers to implementation of the four components of the approach.. In some cases, this means schools operate on a seven-period day or block scheduling, which is when there are longer classes, but not necessarily every day. A recent evaluation of Linked Learning, for example, found that it is essential to have "a

supportive master schedule that allows for pure student cohorts that spend all of or almost all of their school day moving through classes together."[13] This evaluation also found that high-quality Linked Learning pathways had master collaborative schedules in place that included common planning time for pathway staff and "cohort purity,"[14] which is when student cohorts move from class to class together throughout the year.[15] This means that the groups of students who are in health care pathways, for example, will all have access to the same college- and career-preparation courses. This further personalizes the learning experience as students consistently engage with their pathway peers and teachers.

Well-implemented Linked Learning pathways allow for creative scheduling that benefits teachers as well. An Education Trust-West report examining systematic interventions in Linked Learning schools found that "teachers at most of the schools reported that having longer blocks of time to teach courses—along with an advisory period—enables them to provide all students with additional learning opportunities and personalized attention."[16] An independent evaluation of Linked Learning conducted by SRI International found that "without a schedule that allows for common planning, teachers do not have the time and space to build a pathway program together, and do not experience Linked Learning as a cohort."[17]

Some high schools implementing the Linked Learning approach have lengthened the school day. As stated later in this report, some of these schools have School Improvement Grants, or SIGs. SIG funds require schools to increase the amount of time that students spend focused on core academics and enrichment, while also providing teachers with more time for planning, collaboration, and professional development. As noted in the Education Trust-West report, many pathways use additional learning time to help educators identify struggling students early on and to provide them with diverse support systems based on their needs in order to more effectively serve them. For example, remediation in Linked Learning schools might include web-based recovery courses, before- and after-school courses, tutoring, mentoring, and an advisory period to help students meet achievement baselines. This is in sharp contrast to the approach taken by traditional California high schools, where remediation usually consists of forcing students to retake courses with few opportunities for additional interventions.[18]

This report features four school districts representing multiple Linked Learning pathways in various districts in California—the Los Angeles Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, Porterville Unified School District, and Sacramento Unified School District. Five schools are highlighted, where the students are disproportionately students of color and low-income students.

These districts and schools have used a variety of methods to achieve more and better learning time for students and teachers. The most common approaches found were: an expanded school day; out-of-school learning time, such as before- and after-school programs; summer learning; common planning time and professional learning; and work-based learning. Below are insights into how some of California's Linked Learning schools and districts are applying their mission of college and career readiness for all students by increasing learning opportunities through their strategic use of time.

Linked Learning methods

Schools implementing the Linked Learning approach use different methods to provide students and teachers with more and better learning time. Their approaches range from implementing longer school days to increasing afterschool programs and work-based learning. The following sections explore these methods; Data collected were based on site visits, telephone interviews, and reviews of extant data sources.

Expanded school days

The convergence of the Linked Learning approach with expanded learning time creates numerous opportunities for students within the school day. Although high-quality and well-planned expanded learning time is a promising strategy to boost student achievement, it can be challenging to implement. Bus transportation schedules need to be coordinated, curricula needs to be aligned, and classroom space allotments need to be considered, among other things. Many traditional public schools must also confront issues around staff time and compensation—particularly if collective bargaining agreements need to be renegotiated. As the Center for American Progress found through its expanded learning-time research, however, there are many ways to meet these challenges, including through the following approaches:[19]

- Side agreements with teachers unions that include amendments to collective bargaining agreements
- Participation by third-party organizations that can help facilitate the negotiation process, keeping it focused on key priorities for both the district and union
- School-based planning teams that can offer teachers ways to be involved in the discussions and negotiations around redesigning the schools day

The educators and administrators at the schools and districts highlighted in this report have expanded the school day while recognizing the need and the value of meeting the various implementation challenges.

Seven-period days at Skyline High School in Oakland

Skyline High School in the Oakland Unified School District enrolls nearly 1,800 students—92 percent of whom are students of color[20] and 70 percent of whom are low-income[21]— "and houses" three Linked Learning pathways: education, renewable energy and environmental technology, and computer science and technology.[22] During the 2011–12 academic year—following discussions led by the school's principal and faculty council about the need to extend the learning day for students and teachers—Skyline shifted from a six-period day to a seven-period day. The rationale for the change was two-fold. First, the current schedule did not provide enough time for students to meet California's rigorous "a-g" subject requirements—approved high school courses for University of California admissions,[23] which is a broader goal for the district of college and career readiness. Second, teachers did not have enough time to collaborate with each other regarding student support, curricula, work-based learning, and other areas critical to student success.

Skyline shifted to a seven-period day without increasing the number of daily instructional minutes for teachers. Rather than teaching for five periods a day and preparing coursework for one period, the seven-period days allow teachers to use the additional time for pathway collaboration and give students the opportunity to satisfy remedial coursework, participate in dual enrollment, and complete electives and career- and technical-education courses that may not have been an option in a six-period day. Before this shift, the only opportunity that teachers had to collaborate on integrated lesson plans and student support was in the evening and on the weekends—and was largely voluntary—making it difficult to accomplish the four components under the Linked Learning umbrella. With the shift to a seven-period day, teachers are now able to meet on a daily basis to design integrated projects and discuss individual student needs to ensure that students are receiving personalized attention to address learning gaps.

As Skyline enters its third year of implementing expanded learning opportunities, there are some promising indicators of success. Students enrolled in Linked Learning pathways are meeting "a-g" subject requirements at a higher rate than their nonpathway peers—51 percent compared with 33 percent. The success has been attributed to the shifts in practice that were supported by using time more efficiently.[24]

Reimagining the use of time in the Porterville Unified School District

Porterville Unified School District, or PUSD, is home to 14,000 students, 86 percent of whom are low income and 86 percent of whom are students of color.[25] PUSD hopes that its students "will have the skills and knowledge to be prepared for college and career and to make a positive impact in a dynamic global society."[26] With that vision at the forefront, PUSD began implementing the Linked Learning approach in 2009 as part of the California Linked Learning District Initiative, which includes eight other school districts across the state of California.[27] PUSD now operates 10 Linked Learning pathways in five high schools and serves as a mentor district to others districts throughout the state due to its strong coordination across the district.

TABLE 1
Skyline High School: Seven period bell schedule

Period	Start	End	Minutes
Period 1	8:05	8:56	51 min
Passing	8:56	9:01	5 min
Period 2	9:01	9:52	51 min
Passing	9:52	9:57	5 min
Period 3	9:57	10:48	51 min
Passing	10:48	10:53	5 min
Period 4	10:53	11:44	51 min
Lunch	11:44	12:17	33 min
Passing	12:17	12:22	5 min
Period 5	12:22	1:13	51 min
Passing	1:13	1:18	5 min
Period 6	1:18	2:09	51 min
Passing	2:09	2:14	5 min
Period 7	2:14	3:05	51 min

Source: Skyline High School, "Skyline High School 2014-2015 Daily Bell Schedules," available at http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/Page/10512 (last accessed October 2014.)

PUSD's pathways meet a variety of industry needs, including multimedia technology, engineering, agriculture, environmental science, manufacturing, and more. With the introduction of Linked Learning, PUSD leaders recognized that even more needed to be done to increase learning opportunities for students. Additional time became a requirement under the new approach in order to satisfy Linked Learning's ambitious goals. While the districts' three comprehensive high schools were operating a six-period schedule, PUSD decided to pilot a seven-period schedule at a newly built, small, wall-to-wall[28] Linked Learning high school, Harmony Magnet Academy, where all students are enrolled in one of two pathways—the Academy of Engineering or the Academy of Performing Arts. Harmony opened during the 2008–09 school year on a seven-period day modified block schedule. The successful implementation of the seven-period day at Harmony prompted stakeholders to intensify discussions about increasing learning time at the districts' remaining high schools.

TABLE 2

Sample schedule: Harmony Magnet Academy

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Period	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End
0	7:20	8:10	7:20	8:10	7:20	8:10	7:20	8:10	7:20	8:10
1	8:15	9:10	8:15	9:10	8:15	9:10	8:15	9:10	8:15	9:10
2	**9:15**	**11:00**	**9:15**	**11:00**	**9:15**	**11:00**	**9:15**	**11:00**	9:15	10:05
3	**2nd period**	**2nd period**	**3rd period**	**3rd period**	**2nd period**	**2nd period**	**3rd period**	**3rd period**	10:10	11:00
Brunch	11:00	11:10	11:00	11:10	11:00	11:10	11:00	11:10	11:00	11:10
4	**11:15**	**1:00**	**11:15**	**1:00**	**11:15**	**1:00**	**11:15**	**1:00**	11:15	12:05
5	**4th period**	**4th period**	**5th period**	**5th period**	**4th period**	**4th period**	**5th period**	**5th period**	12:10	1:00
Lunch	1:00	1:35	1:00	1:35	1:00	1:35	1:00	1:35	1:00	1:35
6	1:40	2:30	1:40	2:30	1:40	2:30	1:40	2:30	1:40	2:30
7	2:35	3:25	2:35	3:25	2:35	3:25	2:35	3:25	2:35	3:25

Source: Harmony Magnet Academy, "Class schedule," available at http://www.portervilleschools.org/harmony/HarmonyMagnetAcademy/ClassSchedule/tabid/1173/Default.aspx (last accessed October 2014).

Beginning with the 2009–10 school year, all Porterville high schools moved from a six-period, 180-day schedule to a seven-period, 175-day schedule. Their strategy was to take the roughly 1,800 minutes recovered from the annual reduction of five school days and add those minutes to the daily schedule, lengthening each school day by 10 minutes. While this shift required a negotiation with teachers, it did not result in a salary increase, as there were no added instructional minutes.[29]

The district also gave high schools the option to convert to a block schedule or to maintain the traditional school schedule. Three of the schools converted to a modified block, while two of the schools maintained the traditional bell schedule. There is a noted difference between the two groups. According to administrators, teachers at the two schools that maintained the traditional schedule still struggle to find adequate time to work on integrated projects and to deepen the learning experience for students. Meanwhile, the schools that converted to a block schedule are finding greater success in meeting their goals.

The reform strategies that have been adopted in Porterville have led to positive outcomes for all students in Porterville. Students enrolled in Linked Learning pathways are graduating at higher rates, scoring higher rates of proficiency on statewide assessments, taking more AP courses, and achieving a-g subject completions at a higher rate than their nonpathway peers.[30]

TABLE 3

Example of a modified block schedule

Block	Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Block 1	7:40-9:02	English	Band	English	Band	English	Band
Block 2	9:06-10:23	Social Studies	Spanish	Social Studies	Spanish	Social Studies	Spanish
Spartan Period	10:27-11:09	Open Art Studio	Math Help	SAT Prep	Film Appre-ciation	Publication Lab	Open Gym
Block 3 & Lunches	11:13-1:04	Algebra	Phys Ed	Algebra	Phys Ed	Algebra	Phys Ed
Block 4	1:06-2:25	Journalism	Biology	Journalism	Biology	Journalism	Biology

Source: Anna Simoneau, "New Kids on the Block: Southern Lehigh Switching to A/B Block Scheduling for Next Year," *The Spotlight*, January 22, 2013, available at http://slspotlight.com/news/2013/01/22/new-kids-on-the-block-southern-lehigh-switching-to-ab-block-scheduling-for-next-year/.

TABLE 4

Porterville Unified School District Pathway vs. Non-Pathway Data

Indicators	Pathway	Non-Pathway
CST English language arts, proficient and advanced	62.1%	36.3%
CST math, proficient and advanced	31.9%	20.9%
a-g subject requirement completion	31.4%	20.2%
AP courses	19%	11%
High school graduation rates	97%	80%

Note: CST is an abbreviation for California Standards Tests.

Source: These data were provided though an independent pathway-level analysis conducted by the Institute for Evidence-Based Change in Long Beach, California, on June 12, 2014.

Before- and after-school learning

In 2011, the Linked Learning community came together to determine how to align work that occurs during the regular school day with the opportunities before and after school. There were several recommendations; one of the most salient was for school and district leaders to emphasize the expectation that additional learning time is an inherent component of the Linked Learning approach. As a result, many Linked Learning districts now utilize community-based partners to facilitate before- and after-school learning opportunities for pathway students.

Sacramento City Unified School District, or Sac City, which serves 13,000 high school students—82 percent of whom are students of color and 74 percent of whom are low-income students—is doing just that through their many pathways that include health sciences, engineering, and business, among others. Some campuses have added a seventh period to the bell schedule, while others offer activities in defined before or after school settings. Several activities that take place within these out-of-school learning environments are both enrichment and academic activities, including an afterschool robotics course that reinforces curriculum for students enrolled in engineering and computer science pathways and a California High School Exit Exam course that helps to prepare students to successfully complete the math and English Language Arts portion of the state's high school exit exam. There are also English labs available that provide support to students who are English language learners. Every day, nearly 500 high school students are actively engaged in before- and after-school learning activities in Sac City.

Another example, Life Academy in Oakland, runs a 2.5-hour extended-day learning program twice per week. The afterschool program, which is mandatory for all 9th and 10th graders, provides a range of opportunities, including personalized assistance to satisfy remedial coursework by working directly with classroom teachers who are familiar with their learning patterns and assistance for students from afterschool community partners in an academic study hall setting where they get help with their homework and other project-based or problem-based tasks.

As the Linked Learning community continues to be strategic and purposeful about how time is used, greater community engagement will be critical. Afterschool providers play an important role in ensuring that their programming is aligned with the various needs of each school and that the before- and after-school learning reinforces what students are learning during the regular school day. Moreover, the community should ensure that before- and after-school learning opportunities are systemic and equitable, giving all students an opportunity to benefit from the additional learning time and needed student support.

Funding for out-of-school programs

The federal 21st Century Community Learning Center, or CCLC, program funds the out-of-school programs in both Sac City and Oakland.[31] Reauthorized in 2001 under the No Child Left Behind Act, the purpose of the program is to "support the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools."[32] Funded at $1.15 billion during fiscal year 2014, the program served nearly 2 million students in 11,000 centers.

With the recent momentum of the expanded learning time movement, however, the U.S. Department of Education under No Child Left Behind gave state education agencies with waivers the flexibility to use 21st CCLC funding to support schools that want to significantly lengthen the school day, week, or year to increase learning time for students and teachers.[33] Under the recently approved FY 2015 bill from the Senate Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, the flexibility initiated by the department would be extended to all 21st CCLC grantees. This would give them the option to use this funding to significantly increase the number of hours in a school's academic calendar. Should this change be made permanent, a significant number of schools would have much more flexibility to use these funds to lengthen the school day in addition to offering traditional out-of-school time programming.

Summer learning

Summer learning at the secondary-school level comes in a variety of forms, ranging from traditional summer school courses that either remediate or accelerate student learning to summer bridge programs for rising middle and high school students.

Summer learning is critical for students of color and low-income students, who typically begin the regular academic year already lagging behind their peers. In a review and meta-analysis of 39 studies, researchers found that the average student loses about one month of academic proficiency during the summer and that summer break is more detrimental for low-income students than middle-class students, particularly in terms of reading and language achievement.[34] In a quantitative analysis of children in Baltimore public schools, researchers found that summer learning gaps largely account for differences between students from

low- and high- socioeconomic backgrounds with regard to high school placement, high school completion, and enrollment at a four-year college or university.[35] Linked Learning districts and schools are working to change the trajectory for students who lose proficiency during the summer through summer learning opportunities that are aligned with the work that occurs during the academic year.

Life Academy in Oakland

Life Academy in Oakland enrolls more than 400 students—98 percent of whom are students of color and 100 percent of whom are from low-income families. Life Academy is a wall-to-wall Linked Learning high school with three pathways: medicine, mental health, and biotechnology.[36] Life Academy has taken a dual approach to maximizing summer learning time. Both students and teachers are engaged in a series of enrichment and professional-development opportunities that reflect the school's mission "to dramatically interrupt patterns of injustice and inequity for underserved communities in Oakland."[37]

Teachers at Life Academy engage in both leadership activities and professional development during the summer. Two groups—the professional development team and the governance team—meet during the summer to prepare for the upcoming school year and advise both teaching and campus governance. Professional development at Life Academy is run by teachers, for teachers. The professional development team is responsible for planning the necessary training that will be instrumental to moving the needle on student performance based on lessons learned from the recently completed academic year. The governance team, comprising of both teachers and administrators, discuss the various systems that inhibit student success—for example, attendance, scheduling, and grading policies—and how to address them.

Students at Life Academy participate in one of two main programs during the summer, a certification boot camp and a summer bridge program. The two-week certification boot camp is for students who have failed to reach mastery on particular certifications over the course of the year, including assessments, tests, and performance assessments that gauge student comprehension. The boot camp provides an opportunity for these students to work with the same teacher over the course of the camp until they reach mastery. Roughly 30 percent of the student body participates in the boot camp, which plays an integral part in preparing students for grade-level coursework when the new school year begins.[38] The

summer bridge program is for incoming sixth graders and ninth graders. The program, which ranges from two to four weeks, includes several assessments on behavior, academics, and leadership skills and prepares the incoming class for the culture and the expectations of Life Academy. It also positions the teachers and administrators to be thoughtful about where the incoming students will need to be placed during the school year and the type of supports that they will need.

Common planning time and professional learning

A school's master schedule is sacred. Schools are given an average of 6.5 hours each day to accomplish a multiplicity of tasks, including delivering core curriculum. In order to develop high-quality Linked Learning pathways, educators need additional time in the master schedule for collaboration with one another. Without that additional time, teachers do not have the time or the space to plan integrated lessons, group projects, and end-of-course assessments to codify and measure student learning, among other things. Many Linked Learning schools, including those in this report, recognize the importance of a supportive master schedule and are taking strides toward regular and consistent common planning time for pathway teams.

In addition to converting all high schools to a seven-period day, the Porterville Unified School District successfully negotiated with the local teacher's union to implement common planning time for each Linked Learning pathway cohort.[39] Part of the negotiations included a stipend to compensate pathway teachers for the additional responsibilities and time. Pathway teachers in Porterville are required to meet for common planning at least twice per month. At some sites, however, teachers meet more frequently. For example, pathway teachers at Granite Hills High School have one period of common planning time every day when teachers have the opportunity to work on integrated projects and discuss individual students to determine appropriate supports and necessary interventions. At Harmony Magnet Academy, teachers and counselors collaborate to construct a student's academic plan for the full calendar year, allowing the team to identify students in need of academic, social, and emotional interventions and to work to address them.

Sac City is in negotiations with its teaching force to create an opportunity for common planning time to be a regular part of the master schedule.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the pathway teachers at Skyline High School in Oakland meet daily to plunge deeper and with greater fidelity into integrated curriculum, work-based learning, and personalized student supports to ensure that students do not fall behind academically.

Work-based learning

An integral component of the Linked Learning approach is the opportunity to experience the world outside of a school's four walls. Work-based learning is an essential ingredient that merges classroom practice with real-life applicability in a workplace setting. It is an extension of the student's academic experience where practice meets profession. All of the schools and districts highlighted in this report offer a continuum of work-based learning opportunities for their students—ranging from shadow days, when students spend a day working alongside professionals, to professional mentorship opportunities, to job training and internships.

All rising 11th-grade pathway students at Skyline High School are offered a work-based learning experience through a summer internship—a four-week industry-themed internship that is coupled with weekly seminar courses on time management, leadership roles, diversity in the workplace, stress management, and other areas critical to the world of work. Skyline also offers work-based learning opportunities to students that are integrated during the regular school year, including the school's Education Academy, where 12th-grade students mentor their 9th grade counterparts on "a-g" subject requirements, high school success strategies, and the college planning process in a program called Peers Advising Students 2 Succeed, or PASS-2.[40] The seniors conduct workshops and facilitate a discourse about preparing for college, which gives them an opportunity to serve as leaders and mentors to their younger peers. Another campus-based and work-based learning opportunity is the school's Computer Academy, where academy students are assigned to complete technology upgrades, refurbish computers, and provide other technology support that is needed on campus.

Case Study: Linked Learning, time use, and school improvement at Manual Arts Senior High School

Federally funded School Improvement Grants, better known as SIG,[41] are grants given to state education agencies that are used as competitive grants for school districts to turn around the lowest-achieving schools.[42] The SIG program seeks to spur school turnaround by requiring schools to implement one of four intervention models, two of which—the turnaround and transformation models—require schools to increase learning time.[43] The following section describes how Manual Arts Senior High School, a SIG school with a newly implemented Linked Learning pathway, is increasing learning time to improve outcomes for its students.[44]

More time for students

Manual Arts Senior High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District enrolls approximately 1,867 students—99 percent of whom are students of color and 62 percent of whom are low-income.[45] During the 2013–14 school year, Manual Arts Senior High School began implementing a health science Linked Learning pathway that enrolled nearly 400 students.[46] Although the pathway is in its nascent stages and school leaders are still working to fully develop the four components of Linked Learning, SIG funding has enabled them to significantly increase learning time by adding 30 minutes of instruction to the daily schedule, fully transitioning to an eight-period day, and incorporating a 90-minute block schedule to allow for additional project-based learning. The added eighth period, specifically designated as an advisory period, has allowed the school to provide more opportunities for intervention and credit recovery, especially around English Language Arts and math. The extra time has not focused exclusively on core academics, however, as enrichment and extracurricular activities are still offered.

More time for teachers and staff

The confluence of Linked Learning implementation with SIG reform strategies gave Manual Arts an opportunity to provide more time for teacher development as well. The block schedule, for example, provides pathway teachers with common planning time—an essential component of high-quality Linked Learning pathways—during which pathway teachers collaborate as a small community to develop and refine their work and review course material. SIG funds provide additional compensation for teachers to do this work and also provide the school with opportunities for additional support staff and college and career counselors. Most notably, the infusion of SIG funding allowed the counselor caseload to decrease from 250 students to 100 students per counselor, which provided additional opportunities to increase personalization.

Successes and challenges

According to the principal at Manual Arts, the increased learning time afforded through SIG funding has contributed to a 6 percentage point increase in graduation rates, from 69 percent in 2012 to 75 percent in 2013, as well as a noticeable decrease in suspensions.[47] These results, however, may be short-lived. As the school approaches the 2014–15 school year—their final year under the SIG grant—the leadership is grappling with how they will be able to sustain their strategies around increased learning time without the necessary funding to support the work.

Policy recommendations

As the movement to significantly increase learning time continues to garner the attention of state and federal policymakers and education advocates around the country, there are still a number of opportunities where policy can either be strengthened or introduced in order to ensure that increased opportunities for learning are extended to all students who need it. The increased learning time strategies featured in this report can only be sustained through supportive and consistent local, state, and federal policy frameworks that provide for additional funding and multiple entry points to implementation. As such, the Center for American Progress and the Alliance for Excellent Education make the following recommendations for policymakers to support and incentivize increased learning time within Linked Learning pathways and other models of comprehensive high school reform.

District recommendations

Districts should give schools the flexibility to redesign their master schedules so that teachers and students have the time necessary to implement effective approaches to high school reform such as Linked Learning. This would also allow additional learning time for students and would provide teachers with the time necessary for effective planning, collaboration, and professional development.

In California, districts receiving new funding through the recently enacted Local Control Funding Formula—particularly those implementing the Linked Learning approach—should consider using a portion of these funds to increase learning time for students, including through quality out-of-school time and summer activities.[48]

State recommendations

States should enact high school reform policy—learning from California—to provide effective college and career pathways for students.

States should reform funding policies, whether through general funds or categorical programs, to permit and incentivize schools to more creatively use time—before and after school, expanded days, summer learning, work-based learning, and more—through local decision-making and accountability for how funds will be spent to meet state priorities.

The state of California has implemented comprehensive high school reform policy over the past several years. The state legislature passed the Linked Learning Pilot Program in 2011, building on the privately funded Linked Learning District Initiative that began in 2009. On the heels of this bill came the California Career Pathways Trust, providing $500 million over two years to allocate competitive grants in support of a regional infrastructure for career pathways, based on the Linked Learning approach. As part of the criteria for renewal and ongoing technical assistance of these delivery systems, the state should encourage grantees to increase learning time and provide technical assistance on effective ways to do so.

Federal recommendations

The reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—specifically Title II Part A—should clearly articulate that funds may be used for common planning time and professional development between career and technical education and academic teachers, which would support the development of cross-curricular programs, integrated coursework, and applied learning opportunities for students.

Congress should increase funding and flexibility for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Funding should encourage local matches and community partnerships to efficiently use existing local skills and resources. In addition to increasing funding for the program, Congress should pass the FY 2015 Senate Labor, Health, and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Reported Bill and Draft Report to allow 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees the flexibility to use grant funds for extending learning time.

Congress should fund the administration's proposal for a high school redesign program that includes support for more strategically using time. For fiscal years 2014 and 2015, President Obama proposed funding for a program that would promote entire school transformations that position students to graduate from high school with credits toward a postsecondary credential and with career-related experiences and competencies, consistent with the Linked Learning approach. These modernized high schools would support increased learning opportunities, as well as other elements of high school transformation. These would include:

- Using time more effectively, including through the application of technology, the redesign of school calendars, and competency-based progression
- Redesigning content and instruction to align with postsecondary expectations
- Implementing personalized instruction and applied-learning opportunities such as work-based learning and project-based learning
- Providing high-quality career and college exploration and counseling services
- Offering wraparound services such as counseling and health services to address the social, emotional, and other needs of students
- Fostering opportunities for students to earn postsecondary credit(s) and industry-recognized credentials while in high school
- Offering evidence-based professional development for educators.

Such reform efforts should track outcomes in order to gauge success, including high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary persistence beyond the first year, and postsecondary credential attainment.

The Department of Education should increase resources and technical support to ensure high-quality implementation of increased learning time in SIG schools. According to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report, schools implementing SIG models that required increased learning time faced significant challenges with respect to their ability to implement such a comprehensive reform in a short period of time.[49] The report also noted that the U.S. Department of Education, through its own monitoring, found that districts were not appropriately implementing increased learning time requirements in about half of the states it monitored

during the 2011–12 school year.[50] The time and complexity of implementing increased learning time were cited as implementation challenges.[51]

Further, in a comprehensive analysis of SIG plans that expand the learning day, it was evident that many SIG grantees lacked the capacity or adequate staff or planned to "shave a few minutes off recess and lunch to redirect this time toward instruction."[52] The department should enhance its technical assistance to states in this area in order for more schools to make effective use of more and better learning time strategies as demonstrated by the Linked Learning schools described in this report.

Conclusion

Significantly lengthening the day in high schools can be a challenge. However, as this report demonstrates, this does not mean that high schools must remain confined to the traditional high school structure. Across the country, high schools are rethinking the traditional high school schedule and structure to meet the needs of students and better prepare them for both college and career. In some instances this means creatively using existing time as a conduit for boosting student achievement and turning around low-performing schools. In other instances, this means that schools are challenging conventional thinking and significantly lengthening the school day or year for high school students through partnerships with local businesses and community-based organizations that provide services before school, after school, and during the summer.

These demonstrated frameworks for successfully increasing learning time through the Linked Learning approach provide a promising strategy for changing the trajectory of outcomes for underserved students who have long been inadequately prepared to compete in a fast-paced 21st century global economy. Policymakers, practitioners, and the greater community should collectively address these challenges and work to ensure that each and every child is truly prepared and empowered to make an educated decision on the postsecondary path that he or she will take after high school.

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Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the Ford Foundation and the James Irvine Foundation for their sponsorship of this publication, as well as their ongoing support of our education programs. We would also like to thank the schools that took time to speak with us about their Linked Learning pathways to help better inform the report. Finally, we would also like to thank ConnectED, the Linked Learning Alliance, the Partnership for Children and Youth, and Children Now who all helped inform the report. The thoughts and opinions presented in this report are those of the Center for American Progress and the Alliance for Excellent Education alone and do not necessarily represent opinions of the Ford Foundation an the James Irvine Foundation.

Appendix

Tables listed in Appendix are all from the 2012-13 school year

TABLE A1

Sacramento Unified School District

Total student enrollment	47,616
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	37.1%
Asian	17.4%
Filipino	1.1%
Pacific Islander	1.7%
African American	17.7%
White	18.8%
Economically disadvantaged	74.0%
Students with disabilities	12.2%
English language learners	23.7%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A2

Oakland Unified School District

Total student enrollment	46,486
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	41.9%
Asian	13.6%
Pacific Islander	1.1%
African American	29.1%
White	9.2%
Economically disadvantaged	78.6%
Students with disabilities	11.3%
English language learners	30.8%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A3

Life Academy

Total student enrollment	338
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	81.7%
Asian	7.4%
Filipino	1.2%
African American	6.5%
White	2.4%
Economically disadvantaged	100%
Students with disabilities	10.4%
English language learners	29.6%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A4

Skyline High School

Total student enrollment	1,798
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	35.2%
Asian	17.1%
Filipino	1.1%
Pacific Islander	1.4%
African American	35.8%
White	7.4%
Economically disadvantaged	70.4%
Students with disabilities	8.6%
English language learners	14.7%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A5

Porterville Unified School District

Total student enrollment	13, 835
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	77.9%
Asian	2.2%
Filipino	1.8%
Pacific Islander	0.9%
African American	0.5%
White	14.9%
Economically disadvantaged	84.8%
Students with disabilities	4.1%
English language learners	26.2%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A6

Harmony Magnet Academy

Total student enrollment	487
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	62.0%
Asian	2.1%
Filipino	2.1%
African American	0.8%
White	27.1%
Economically disadvantaged	60.4%
Students with disabilities	0.4%
English language learners	4.9%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A7

Granite Hills High School

Total student enrollment	1,094
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	81.9%
Asian	1.3%
American Indian	1.3%
African American	0.5%
White	13.4%
Economically disadvantaged	90.3%
Students with disabilities	3.7%
English language learners	15.7%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A8

Los Angeles Unified School District

Total student enrollment	655,494
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	73.6%
Asian	4.0%
Filipino	2.1%
African American	9.4%
White	9.2%
Economically disadvantaged	71.3%
Students with disabilities	12.6%
English language learners	28.0%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

TABLE A9

Manual Arts High School

Total student enrollment	1,539
Subgroup	**percentage**
Hispanic or Latino	80.1%
African American	19.1%
White	0.4%
Economically disadvantaged	92.3%
Students with disabilities	9.2%
English language learners	29.5%

Source: California Department of Education, "California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)," available at http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/ (last accessed August 2014).

Endnotes

1 Sheila Byrd Carmichael and others, "The state of state standards—and the common core—in 2010" (Washington: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2010), available at http://edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2010/201007_state_education_standards_common_standards/SOSSandCC2010_FullReportFINAL.pdf; David T. Conley and others, "Reaching the Goal: The Applicability and Importance of the Common Core State Standards to College and Career Readiness" (Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2011); David T. Conley and others, "Lining Up: The Relationship between the Common Core State Standards and Five Sets of Companion Standards (Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2011).

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5 Students that voluntarily participate in the Linked Learning approach are enrolled in various industry-themed pathways in a wide range of fields such as engineering, health care, performing arts, law, and more. These students are referred to as "pathway students," distinguishing them from their peers that are enrolled in the general student body, not participating in a pathway experience.

6 Roneeta Guha and others, "Taking stock of the California Linked Learning District Initiative. Fourth-Year Evaluation Report" (Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 2014).

7 Marisa Saunders, John Rogers, and Veronica Terriquez, "Exploring the educational, labor market, and civic trajectories of young adults who attended Linked Learning pathways: Survey and Interview Findings" (Los Angeles: Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access, 2013).

8 For the purposes of this report, the term "increased learning time" is used to capture the following scenarios: an extended/lengthened school day or year; time re-ordered and used more purposefully within a traditional school day or year; before- and after-school learning; summer learning programs; work-based learning programs; time used for common planning time for teachers; and more and better learning time.

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26 "Porterville Unified School District," available at http://dnn.portervilleschools.org/ (last accessed July 2014).

27 The California Linked Learning District Initiative, launched in 2009 by The James Irvine Foundation, includes nine member districts: Antioch Unified, Long Beach Unified, Los Angeles Unified, Montebello Unified, Oakland Unified, Pasadena Unified, Porterville Unified, Sacramento Unified, and West Contra Costa Unified. The California Center for College and Career, "California Linked Learning District Initiative," available at http://www.connectedcalifornia.org/schools_districts/district_initiative (last accessed September 2014).

28 The authors define a "wall-to-wall" Linked Learning high school as a school that has all of its students enrolled in a Linked Learning pathway. Most high schools that offer Linked Learning have the majority of their students enrolled in the general student body where students take the traditional route to a high school diploma.

29 Beginning with the 2014–15 school year, PUSD was able to negotiate the additional five days back onto the calendar and keep the extended day with a slight salary increase for teachers. Source: John Snavely, interview with author, Washington, D.C., June 10, 2014

30 These data were provided though an independent pathway-level analysis conducted by the Institute for Evidence-Based Change in Long Beach, California, on June 12, 2014.

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43 The U.S. Department of Education defines increased learning time as "using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects." See " School Improvement Grants; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (AARA); Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended (ESEA)," *Federal Register* 75 (208) (2010), available at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/2010-27313.pdf.

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