Expanding Equity through More and Better Learning Time

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College readiness calls for tapping the resources of the whole community – higher education, community organizations, businesses, funders, and civic organizations – to support and align learning inside and outside of schools.

At the start of the New Year and the second Obama administration, a national dialogue about extending and improving the school year for *all* students – especially those students who face limited resources within and outside their schools – should be a national priority. Students from affluent families already make up for the short school day and year by counting on their parents to fill these crucial, and sometimes dangerous, afterschool hours with a cornucopia of rich learning experiences. Middle-class families use their own resources to fill their children's afternoons, summers, and vacations with private tutoring for academic enrichment, music and art lessons, science camp, and sports activities. Parents know and research proves that these activities are not "extra" – they are essential to rounding out their children's education and giving them the skills and experiences that prepare them for college and successful careers.

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Expanding learning time is as much about improving the quality of the actual amount of time a child learns as it is about expanding the quality and diversity of a child's learning. Many parents cannot provide such activities for their children. They may not have the money to pay for extra classes and care, and they are often the same parents who work longer hours – including those crucial afterschool and school vacation hours. Similarly, due to the systemic inequities of America's public school system, these families' children attend schools that have fewer educational resources: less-qualified teachers; fewer educational materials; fewer science, arts, and sports opportunities on campus; and unsafe schools and neighborhoods. This is why creating quality schools, with more resources and better teaching and learning, becomes just as important as extending the actual time. Without addressing the growing divide between these two groups of students in cities across the nation, we continue to impede opportunities for many of our students based on conditions beyond their control.

EFFECTIVE TIME – NOT JUST *MORE* TIME

It's widely recognized that high school graduation is no longer sufficient – all students must now be prepared to succeed in college or workforce pursuits and empowered to engage their world. But our current system – a six-hour school day and 180-day school year, based primarily on a nineteenth-century agrarian calendar and using a business model of education – is inadequate to achieve that goal. Ensuring college readiness extends beyond the reach of schools and districts. It calls for tapping into the resources of the community – higher education, community organizations, businesses, funders, recreation programs, and civic organizations – to support learning outside of schools and align it with

what happens inside schools.1 Without that alignment, the new national goal of transforming schools for college readiness will be impossible.

Yet, the expansion of the school day is no simple matter of just adding minutes to the existing school structure. To increase the equity of the school system, time needs to be thought of as a strategic tool – a tool that can give teachers more time to collaborate and plan, students more opportunities to access meaningful new learning environments, and school systems the opportunity to benefit from new community resources. Meaningful expansion of learning time also means that existing out-of-school programs, community and business partners, teachers, principals, and district leaders need to collaborate across their existing divides to restructure resources and align opportunities.

AISR believes that expanded learning must be rigorous and engaging, and it should not simply provide longer time for ineffective practices. We are currently working with the Ford Foundation on documenting evidence of such expanded learning reforms that are being developed with support from the Foundation in cities across the nation. We are working with other national partners, including the National Center for Time and Learning (NCTL) and UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA), to systemically gather evidence of these new and creative reforms using measures that extend beyond standardized testing.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Expanded learning time (ELT) can involve increasing the time for learning
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1 AISR calls such a system of cross-sector partnerships a "smart education system": see the section Ecosystem-Level Indicators in this article. For more on AISR's work on college readiness, see Foley, Mishook, and Lee's article in this issue of *VUE*.

at schools by adding days to the school year, hours to the school day, or both – but must ensure that all time provides for valuable teaching and learning. Schools using evidence-based ELT practices and supporting programs have improved student achievement across several student subgroups (Bodilly & Beckett 2005; Duffett et al. 2004; AYP Forum 2006).

It may be obvious that spending more time in school can produce better academic results. But what may not be as obvious is that not all students have equal access to more and better learning time. This is especially true when addressing the loss in learning that occurs over the summer vacation. Summer learning is important for all students, especially for low-income families, since they and their schools tend to have the fewest resources available to them (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson 2007; McCombs, Rand Education Institute & Wallace Foundation 2011). Yet despite the importance that summer learning has for low-income students, they are less likely to participate in out-of-school-time programs than high-income students (Wimer et al. 2006). This serves to widen the growing academic gap between those who can afford extra learning and those who cannot. So as a national discussion continues to develop, we see that "extending learning time has gained traction as a strategy for improving equity and narrowing achievement gap" (McAlister 2013).

More time in school also lessens idle time for students. For those students who live in underserved communities, this idle time can transform itself into dangerous choices that often result in further limiting future opportunities already hindered by social inequality. Hence, providing more time for students to learn in a welcoming environment across a range of subjects with a diverse set of caring adults can provide students with an opportunity for greater equality and social mobility.

For some examples emerging around the nation of using time to create equitable changes in schools, see the sidebar on pages 30 – 31.

FORD FOUNDATION'S MORE AND BETTER LEARNING TIME INITIATIVE: NEW WAYS TO MEASURE EFFECTIVENESS

AISR is proud to be a partner in the Ford Foundation's More and Better Learning Time (MBLT) initiative, which aims to make effective expanded learning time (ELT) practices the "new normal" across American schools, especially in underserved communities. The Foundation's multilayered approach includes deep investments in six large cities – Rochester (NY), Newark, Chicago, Detroit, Denver, and Los Angeles, as well as state-level and national ELT efforts.

Like AISR's "smart education system" theory,[2] the Ford Foundation's theory of change includes the idea that transforming education systems requires multiple stakeholders. Grantees are involved in developing ideas and evidence compellingly communicated to shape public and policy discussions; scalable school designs that are effective and operating in the "regular" public school system; support and advocacy from grass-tops and grassroots – including those in affected communities – creating the public support and political will to adopt MBLT reforms; and policy changes and increased capacity to bring systemwide changes needed to implement sustainable MBLT at scale.

Ford has charged AISR, UCLA IDEA, and NCTL with developing a system of indicators that will bring a deeper understanding of how expanded

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2 For more in the concept of smart education systems, see Warren Simmons's article in this issue of *VUE* and http://annenberginstitute. org/about/smart-education-systems.

learning is changing the lives of students, the quality and rigor of schools, and the strength of the district systems and community supports that surround schools.

The goal of creating a multilevel indicator system is to document the current work on MBLT in Ford grantee sites and use that knowledge to create a national system of indicators that can both measure and inform the MBLT initiative going forward and the ELT field in general. Grounding development of the indicators in the real work of MBLT grantees, as well as the research, will produce a reliable and useful indicator system for the field.

ECOSYSTEM-LEVEL INDICATORS

The idea of the reform ecosystem begins with the assumption that schools do not operate in a vacuum but rather exist and coexist within the local, state, and national policies that impact how their students learn and grow. As one example, it has been documented that out-of-school programs can positively affect students, especially low

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IN THE FIELD | **USING EXPANDED TIME TO INCREASE EQUITY**

Generation Schools

The Generation Schools model has been successfully implemented in Brooklyn and Denver. The first school was launched in 2004 using practices tested by more than a decade of pilot program–driven research and evaluation. Generation Schools expand learning time by up to 30 percent for all students without increasing teachers' time in the classroom. In fact, by staggering teacher schedules and leveraging cutting-edge instructional technology, Generation Schools provides its teachers with increased professional development and daily common planning time. Students are in school for 200 days per year, but teachers work the same number of days as they would in a school following a traditional calendar. This additional time is high quality; students enjoy personalized instruction in studio classes, where they have the chance to engage in arts, music, foreign language, and counseling, among other options. Furthermore, students engage in month-long intensive classes twice a year, where college guidance intersects with reading and math instruction and students have the chance to explore colleges, boardrooms, community organizations, and public service opportunities around the city.

The Generation Schools model has garnered national praise because it offers expanded learning time and highly effective instruction without significantly increasing schools' per-pupil expenditures. A report from the University of Pennsylvania showed significant growth by Generation Schools students, noting that the program is relatively new, but that "early performance indicators are promising" (Barrett et al. 2011, p. 56). While only 20 percent of the Brooklyn school's students were on grade level when they matriculated, they passed the 2010 New York State exams at nearly four times that rate.

For more on Generation Schools, see www.generationschools.org.

Citizen Schools

Citizen Schools Massachusetts has developed an expanded learning time model that has inspired New York City and Chicago, among other cities, to expand the school day. Their schedule for sixth-graders includes an expanded day that lasts for an additional three hours on Monday to Thursday afternoons. Students participate in apprenticeships in fields such as architecture and journalism, academic support

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socio-economic students (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson 2007; AYP Forum 2006; Wallace Foundation 2008; Wimer, et al. 2006). Yet, in an ailing economy, funding for schools and out-of-school programs is often cut. To ensure that all students are being given equal opportunities to access out-of-school programs, especially low socio-economic status students, outside resources are necessary. Understanding who makes up an ecosystem and how they must work together to increase equity is a key part of understanding a reform strategy like MBLT.

Ideally, in a reform like MBLT, partners will work to form what AISR calls a smart education system (SES) – that is, a system of cross-sector partnerships collaborating to increase opportunities and outcomes for low-income students and students of color, including English language learners. AISR developed an SES framework based on years of work in the practice of school reform combined with education research (Simmons 2007). An SES addresses persistent achievement gaps and developing sustainable education reforms through the combined commitment,

sessions that emphasize enrichment and quality homework, college-to-career connections focusing on college exposure and study habits, and culture of achievement sessions.

Results show that students enrolled in Citizen Schools or who participate in the programs they run are more engaged and successful than their peers, even years later. An external study conducted by Policy Studies Associates found that the program impacted chronic absenteeism, as Citizen Schools alumni attended high school for seven more weeks on average than their peers (Arcaira, Vile & Reisner 2010). Furthermore, Citizen Schools students passed state exams at a higher rate and showed greater enthusiasm for school. Citizen Schools convened an expanded learning time summit in July 2012 for school leaders who were planning to implement a longer school day.

For more on Citizen Schools, see www.citizenschools.org/about/results.

Linked Learning

Linked Learning is a system that integrates a rigorous academic program with exposure to professional experiences. It offers students a significant amount of choice in their expanded school day, and students who participate graduate at a higher rate than their peers. Its design features an academic program with rigorous instruction in the core subjects, a technical component where students take three or more classes in a field, work-based learning opportunities that start with mentoring and shadowing and turn into apprenticeships or internships, and support services such as counseling and supplemental academic instruction. Los Angeles's Linked Learning sites are partnering with organizations such as ConnectEd, the Alliance for a Better Community, UCLA Center X, UNITE-LA, and the LA Small Schools Center (LASCC) to make these opportunities available for its students.

For more on Linked Learning, see www.linkedlearning.org.

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Arcaira, E., J. D. Vile, and E. R. Reisner. 2010. *Citizen Schools: Achieving High School Graduation: Citizen Schools' Youth Outcomes in Boston.* Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.

efforts, and investment of an entire community (National Commission on Civic Investment in Public Education 2011; Warren 2005).

SES reforms assume that technical solutions alone will not improve the conditions and outcomes of schooling. Effective solutions should involve building social, cultural, and political capital of impacted communities (Hubbard & Stein 2006; Oakes et al. 1998; Welner 2001). Working *with* the community is just as important as working *for* the community. Ensuring that the system leads to learning and development on a broad set of positive outcomes, including but not limited to academic achievement, and developing indicators and measures that foster shared accountability across partner organizations and groups are important to an SES (Foley et al. 2008; Mishook 2012). Thus, all stakeholders in the education system must deal candidly with cultural, racial, and political factors and build the trust they need to develop productive and equitable partnerships.

We recognize that there is no one solution. Rather, a multitude of solutions must be levied onto schools, especially those located in areas of poverty, aimed at reducing the opportunity gap between affluent and non-affluent families. Therefore, ecosystems that successfully provide school resources to reduce this gap must be documented and possibly replicated in other areas. It is an ecosystem that supports learning and development, with insiders and outsiders working together to influence education reform.

THE VISION GOING FORWARD

The More and Better Learning Time initiative moves toward education equity by recognizing that though we all value extended and improved learning time, not all students have the resources to make it possible. The national

dialogue around this issue is important. But even more important is the action needed to create an educational system that recognizes its limitations in solving all social inequalities, but does not shy away from what is possible within our school classrooms and walls.

By bringing together AISR, UCLA IDEA, and NCTL, the Ford Foundation's MBLT initiative is taking the next step in a national strategy of making More and Better Learning Time the new normal. This partnership of educational researchers seeks to document the existing work on the ground, policies in place and those being drafted, and a new pedagogical approach to public education that leaves behind class time limitations of the past and propels us into a new twenty-first century education for all.

There are many organizations, school districts, union leaders, educators, and community leaders joining the effort to expand the amount and improve the quality of learning time. The new national Time to Succeed coalition is one example of the growing momentum.[3] Other evidence that this idea is taking hold is that the United States Department of Education requires expanded learning to be a component of reforms funded with federal School Improvement Grants, and it created a process allowing states applying for ESEA waivers new opportunities to spend federal money on expanded time. But as with any large policy, the devil is in the details – how expanded learning time will be developed and implemented is being decided in schools and districts around the nation.

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3 See www.timetosucceed.com and http://annenberginstitute.org/ commentary/2012/06/time-succeed-coalition-making-expanded-learning-time-priority.

As an institute working to advance educational equity, we believe that there are some core principles that must be in place to ensure that the equity intent of expanded learning time is met and sustained.

- Equity must remain at the center of how expanded learning time is developed, transformed into policy, implemented, and sustained. The promise of expanded learning time is to bring needed educational resources to children in low-income communities and communities of color.

- Teachers and high-quality teaching must be at the heart of this reform – staggered schedules, collaborative work time, and data-informed instruction are all examples.

- The additional time must be significant in amount and must be used to restructure the entire school day. This reform cannot be limited to tacking on a few minutes of more of the same for some students – it means using time to shift the content and style of teaching, create new kinds of learning opportunities, and increase access to and quality of learning.

- Expanded learning time reforms need to engage the entire community within and outside of the school. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents should help shape, implement, and monitor various details of the reform along with traditional school, afterschool, community, business, and government leaders engaged in creating the reform at the local, state, and national levels.

- The reform must be comprehensive and integrated into the school to reach equity: this means *all* students attending a school must be included in the high quality.

- Success must be defined and measured on multiple dimensions – increasing test scores is not the sole goal of the education system, nor should it be the sole goal of an expanded learning time reform.

- The goal of an expanded learning time reform should be creating rich, high-quality personalized educational journeys for all students, especially in low-income communities of color. We will know the reforms are succeeding when students in the nation's lowest-performing schools are growing academically, physically, and psychologically and meet ambitious educational and career goals.

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