







Listening to Experts:

What Massachusetts
Teachers are Saying
about Time and
Learning and the
Expanded Learning
Time Initiative



Our View

merica's future depends on our ability to help our country's children become tomorrow's citizens, workers, and parents. When we invest wisely in children, the next generation will repay us back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. When we fail to provide children what they need to build a strong foundation for healthy and productive lives, we put America's future prosperity at risk.

Teachers are at the heart of building America's future through their work educating our children. Again and again we see that the quality of teaching makes the difference for America's youth. We hear regularly about the teacher who helped an author discover his voice, the leading scientist who first looked through a microscope under the guidance of her middle school biology teacher, or the Academy Award winner thanking his drama teacher who taught him Shakespeare. America's teachers are at the center of our children's exploration, discovery, and awakening. It is our country's teachers who give flight to our dreams, root our lives in history, plant seeds that will bear fruit for a lifetime, and open doors to lives not yet known.

But as we continue to demand more of our schools, increasingly, teachers are finding that the traditional school schedule, which has not changed in 100 years, limits their ability to enable all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to meet high expectations. In 2005, Massachusetts launched the nation's first Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative with the support of our two organizations and Massachusetts 2020. Today, with the continued leadership of the state Legislature and Governor Deval Patrick, 26 schools across the state have added 300 hours to their school year. More than 13,500 students and 1,000 teachers are thriving in a school day that allows for deeper engagement in academics, more opportunities for enrichment, and time for teachers to do the important work of strengthening instruction.

Now, as this report documents, new quantitative data collected from teachers across the state and within ELT schools show growing support for a longer school day from those who best understand its importance. Teachers who work

in Massachusetts ELT Schools are finding that a new school day, well-planned and well-implemented, provides more time for engaging academics, robust enrichment, and productive collaboration among teachers that can benefit students and teachers tremendously. Massachusetts is showing that if you give highly qualified teachers more time and the opportunity to rethink the school day from the ground up, they will create a better day for learning and teaching.

The early success of ELT has been made possible, in large part, because teachers have been involved in all

phases of the initiative. Teachers were consulted while the state policy was being designed and were essential to the planning process at most ELT schools. Local unions worked collaboratively with district leadership

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and negotiated labor agreements. They continue to be deeply involved in making the decisions that enable ongoing improvement at implementing schools.

This report highlights the ELT Initiative as a very rare breed of education policy—one that combines the expertise that comes with the involvement of teachers with the power of their broad support.

We urge other states, districts, and the federal government to follow Massachusetts's example. Additional learning time, well-spent, can help build the strong foundation that so many of America's children need and upon which our future prosperity rests.

Sincerely,

Thomas Gosnell

President

American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts

anne Wass

Tom Hosnell

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Massachusetts Teachers Association



Introduction

KEY FINDINGS

Across Massachusetts ...

- Teachers rank "time" as the learning condition that is most responsible for promoting student learning
- Over 60 percent of teachers report there is insufficient time to complete the curriculum, meet the needs of all students, or collaborate with their colleagues about instructional practices
- Teachers in elementary and middle schools are more concerned with the lack of sufficient time than their peers who teach in high schools

In Expanded Learning Time Schools....

- A vast majority (90 percent) believe sufficient time is allotted for core academic subjects and teachers are 40 percent more likely than their peers in non-ELT schools to think there is adequate time to complete the curriculum and meet the needs of all students
- More time is benefiting students:
 - 55 percent of teachers report their students are learning more
 - 78 percent indicate students have more enrichment
 - ELT students are significantly more motivated than their peers
- More time is changing teaching:
 - Nearly six in 10 report more opportunity than before ELT to use multiple teaching methods
 - English classes engage in more writing and independent reading; math classes do more project-based learning
- Teachers have an hour more time per week of common planning time than non-ELT schools and are much more likely than peers in non-ELT schools to report that they have adequate time to collaborate
- Teachers harbor more positive feelings about teaching and the professional culture in their schools, despite higher fatigue

eachers form the bedrock of our educational system and, for that reason, serve as true guardians of our collective future. Yet in the ongoing effort to improve our nation's schools, too often teachers' voices are ignored. No matter how compelling an educational-improvement idea seems to policymakers, politicians, and the public, the worth of any such plan lies only in the extent to which it brings real change to classrooms and the teaching and learning process. So when an educational innovation appears on the scene that generates real support among our teachers, based on their deep understanding of how the change positively impacts student learning, we should stand up and take notice. Teachers are now endorsing additional time for teaching and learning with increasing enthusiasm because it addresses a fundamental flaw in our educational system, and provides greater opportunities to students and teachers alike.

Across the country, schools operate on a schedule of about 180 six-hour days. This is not because they think it is the best schedule or the right schedule but because it has been in place for generations and would be difficult to change. But does this schedule really provide enough time to help all students achieve academic proficiency? Does it allow ample opportunity for struggling students to receive extra individualized attention and also allow proficient students to take on more challenging tasks? Are teachers provided enough time to employ a variety of instructional methods, in order to reach all types of learners? Is there adequate opportunity for students to practice, to master, to explore? Can schools devote adequate time to the core tested subjects of English and math and also enable sufficient time for concentrated study in the indispensable fields of science, history, social studies, and world languages? What about those subjects too often considered "extras"—visual arts, music, drama, sports, and dozens of other enrichments—but that form the essence of a well-rounded education? In short, does our current school schedule match the ambitious goals we have for the next generation of Americans: to graduate from school equipped with the deep knowledge and adaptable skills necessary to become productive workers and engaged citizens?

Providing a high-quality education to students depends on ensuring that our teachers have the time they need to hone their own skills, to collaborate with their colleagues, and to keep growing as professionals so that they can make their classrooms ever better. Does the current schedule allow enough time for teachers to prepare classes, to grade student work, to meet with other teachers by grade and by subject, and to pursue embedded professional development? Can our schools accommodate the fostering of a professional learning community within the confines of the current schedule? And for both teachers and students, is the pace and intensity of school healthy and sustainable? The bottom-line question we must ask is whether our schools, as they are designed today in America, are best able to prepare our children for their (and our) future. According to President Obama, they are not. In his first major address setting forth his vision for education in the United States, President Obama proclaimed that "the challenges of a new century demand more time in the classroom."

New information available through large-scale surveys of teachers across Massachusetts allows us to begin to understand what our front-line educators think about these matters. The survey data also highlight how perceptions of school time vary according to teachers' circumstances—from grades taught to the demographic composition of the student body.

Further, Massachusetts, which boasts the first-inthe-nation program to convert traditional district schools to schools that operate with significantly more hours, offers a near-perfect opportunity to test how changes to time conditions might impact perceptions. The Massachusetts program, known as the Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative, enables schools to develop and implement plans to redesign their whole day around an expanded learning time plan, in which every student has 300 hours more learning time embedded into the core schedule. The 26 ELT schools are spread across a dozen Massachusetts communities and serve 13,500 students who are taught by more than 1,000 teachers. By comparing the responses from these teachers to those of their colleagues in conventional-schedule schools, we can begin to see the effect that more time has on both student learning and teacher collaboration and professional development.

This report aims to address a simple and essential pair of questions from the point of view of the people charged with the awesome responsibility of preparing our children for the ever-growing challenges of the 21st century. What do our front-line educators think about the quantity of time they have now, and how do those who work in ELT schools see their situation differently?

Teachers Say They Need More Time in the Current School Day

he most important source from which to gain insight into teachers' views and perceptions in Massachusetts is the recent Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey (MassTeLLS) of more than 40,000 Bay State teachers. The MassTeLLS data present substantial evidence that, across the state, teachers see a need for more learning time and more time to collaborate with their colleagues. Further, they believe the current school schedule is insufficient to achieve their goals in the classroom.

Teachers rank time in the classroom as the most important factor affecting their ability to teach.

The MassTeLLs data show that teachers rank time in the classroom as the most important factor affecting their ability to teach. When asked "What is the most important teaching condition for promoting student learning?" time was the most popular response among five possible options. In other words, nearly one-third of teachers in the

state believe that, all other things being equal, the time students have to learn and teachers have to teach makes the most difference for student achievement. Such a strong sentiment for the value of learning time suggests an issue schools simply must address. (See Figure 1.) The second most important factor, teacher empowerment, is directly

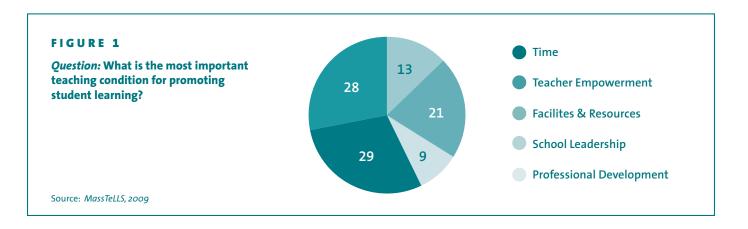
A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

Analysis of the MassTeLLS data was conducted by Massachusetts 2020 using the full dataset of 40,028 responses to the teacher survey, a response rate across the state which exceeded 50 percent. In cases where results have been calculated for statistical significance, the p-value is indicated.

Additional data on ELT teachers, as well as qualitative observations, are drawn from the Year 2 evaluation report of the Expanded Learning Time initiative, released by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) in April 2009. The ESE has contracted with Abt Associates, Inc. to conduct a multi-year, mixed method evaluation of the current 26 ELT schools to assess both the implementation and outcomes of the ELT intervention.

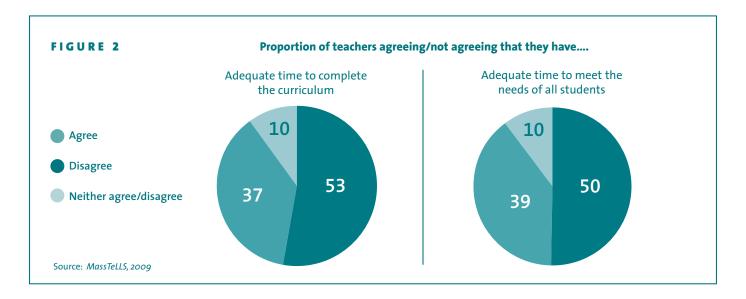
related to having the time to collaborate with colleagues and make decisions directly related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Together these two responses indicate that almost

60 percent of educators see time, and the ability to use it for the purpose of meeting the needs of all students, as key to improving student achievement.



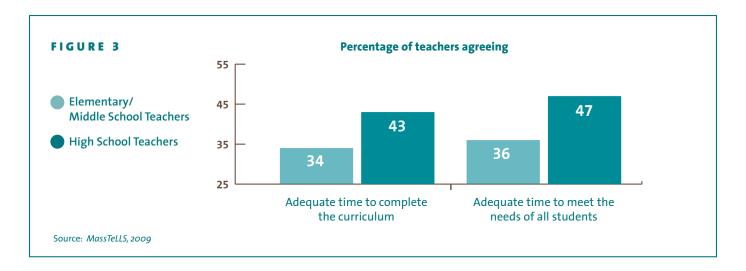
A majority of teachers believe the current school schedule is inadequate to complete the curriculum and meet their students' needs.

On the MassTeLLS survey fewer than four out of ten teachers feel they have adequate time to complete the curriculum (37 percent) and to meet the needs of all their students (39 percent). (See Figure 2.)



While these figures are stark, disaggregating the data to examine the perceptions of teachers in elementary and middle schools shows an even smaller proportion of teachers thinking the quantity of time they have to teach to all their students, especially as compared to high school teachers.

Only 34 percent of teachers of younger students think there is adequate time to complete the curriculum and only 36 percent think there is time to adequately meet the needs of all students, while comparable figures for high school teachers are 43 percent and 47 percent. (See Figure 3.)



Teachers believe they lack sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues and hone their professional practice.

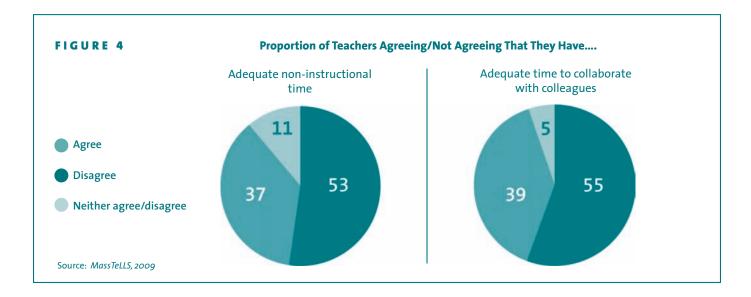
It is not just in the classroom where teachers feel constrained. Teachers also believe the current school schedule does not provide adequate time to communicate with their co-workers about student needs and instructional strategies, or to build and improve their teaching skills. More than 60 percent of teachers did not agree with the statement that they have enough "time available to collaborate with colleagues" or that they have adequate time during the day to prepare for classes, grade papers, and develop lesson plans. (See Figure 4.) Considerable research shows that students in classrooms where their teachers have ample opportunity to work with fellow teachers perform better.² In addition, the United States ranks lowest among all industrialized nations in the portion of work time reserved for class preparation. While countries like Korea, Japan, and Germany reserve up to at

least 50 percent of a teacher's work hours to prepare for classes and collaborate with colleagues, U.S. teachers have less than 20 percent of their work hours dedicated to such essential tasks.³ Like the length of the school day and year, the distribution of teacher time appears to perpetuate the antiquated model of teaching as an occupation that limits collaboration and the cultivation of a professional culture.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"In my day, I am often frustrated by the lack of time to collaborate with my colleagues. I spend a lot of time chasing people down in order to meet about students or we talk about lesson plans in the hallway. I don't get a chance to share with my fellow teachers nearly enough."

Mary Cawley, 5th grade teacher, Hansen Elementary School, Canton



Expanded Learning Time Improves Teaching and Learning

n Massachusetts, through the Expanded
Learning Time (ELT) Initiative, more than 1,000
teachers have the unique opportunity to
work with their students for significantly longer
periods of time. The experiences of these teachers
provide a very clear contrast with teachers across
the state who work in schools with more conventional schedules.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"With Expanded Learning Time, we get into learning activities that we couldn't do before and more hands-on projects. We can actually have children think deeper about what they are learning because we have that extra amount of time. And because we have more time, we can teach more than we normally would. For example, this time last year I hadn't gotten through teaching about probability, but now since we have had more time, I have already gotten through that."

Sherri Carvalho, Sylvia Elementary School, 5th grade math teacher, Fall River

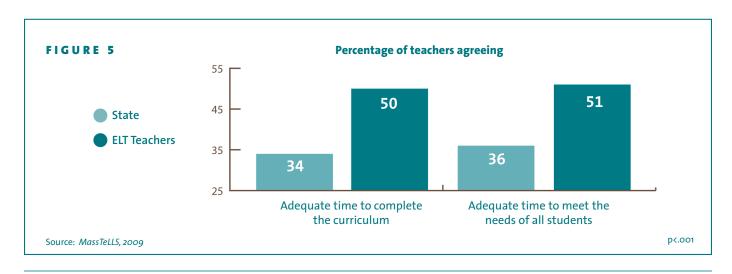
The ELT Initiative is a first-in-the-nation, statewide competitive grant program that awards grants to schools that have presented a strong plan for redesigning their school day—a redesign that is considerably driven by teachers—around a schedule that provides at least 100 more minutes of learning time every day for all students in the school. Now in its third year, the ELT Initiative has enabled 26 schools to expand their school schedules for all students. (For more information on these schools, see endnotes.) The 13,500 students enrolled in these ELT schools benefit from a full redesign of the school day that aims to:

- improve student outcomes in core academic subjects by increasing time for academic instruction and tailoring that time to students' needs;
- build student engagement and interest in learning through a broad array of enrichment opportunities; and
- improve instruction by adding more collaborative planning and professional development time for teachers.

Examining the perceptions and experiences of the teachers who work in ELT schools provides a window to explore changes in working conditions when schools have more time. One clear method to determine whether there is a difference between the experiences of teachers in traditional schools and those in ELT schools is simply to compare responses on MassTeLLS.⁴ A second important source of information is the surveys of teachers conducted as part of the comprehensive evaluation of the ELT Initiative by Abt Associates, Inc. From both sources, teachers in ELT schools perceive the added time very positively both for their students and themselves.

A majority of teachers in ELT schools believe they have enough time to meet student needs

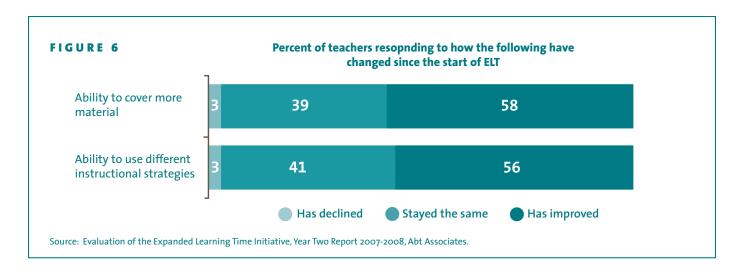
Based on responses to MassTeLLS, teachers at ELT schools are much more likely to believe they have sufficient time to complete the curriculum and meet the needs of all students than are teachers across the rest of the state. As shown in Figure 5, 50 percent of ELT teachers believe they have sufficient time to complete the curriculum compared to 34 percent of teachers in grades K – 8 throughout the state. Similarly, 51 percent of teachers in ELT schools believe they have sufficient time to meet the needs of all students compared to 36 percent across the state. (These differences are statistically significant with a p-value of <.001.)



These findings are further supported in the Year Two report of the six-year Abt Associates evaluation of the ELT Initiative. According to surveys administered by Abt Associates, 90 percent of teachers in ELT schools believe there is sufficient time during the school day allotted for core subject area instruction—a statistically significantly higher percentage than teachers in a set of matched cohort schools.

Teachers at ELT schools report their teaching has changed as a result of having more time

The addition of time for classrooms is not something abstract for these teachers, but makes a real difference in how they are able to teach. When the evaluators asked how the additional time affected instruction, well over half of ELT teachers responded that they were better able to use multiple teaching methods (56 percent) and cover more material (58 percent).

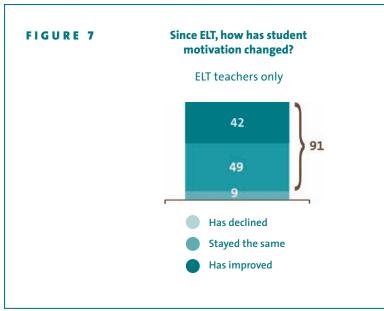


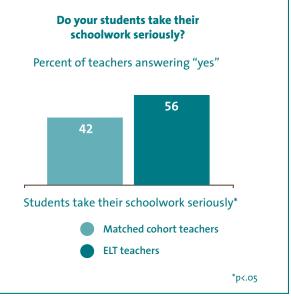
In English classes, often the extra time took the form of having more attention paid to, and practice for, writing and independent reading—two activities that often get short shrift in classes with greater time constraints. In math, teachers found that they were able to build in time for both independent work, especially using manipulatives, and more practice with and concrete application of new concepts. Outside of regularly scheduled class times, many ELT schools have been able to build in time for targeted assistance for struggling students in the form of academic advisory or homework support groups.

Many teachers also reported doing more "on the spot" informal assessments because they were able to spend more time working individually with students to monitor their progress. As evaluators explain, "These findings... indicat[e] that changes in the pace and depth of instruction are amongst the early positive effects of ELT." ⁵

Teachers believe their students are benefiting from the additional time, both in academic performance and in terms of motivation and attitude toward learning Teaching differently only matters, of course, if it makes a difference for student learning. On this measure, teachers are quite positive. Well over half of teachers (55 percent) believe that more learning time is, in fact, leading to overall academic gains among their students (with only 3 percent of teachers believing academic performance has declined).

Interestingly, despite claims that a longer school day might make students less engaged in school and decrease student motivation due to fatigue, 42 percent of teachers indicate that student motivation has improved and only 9 percent believe it has declined. Meanwhile, compared to the teachers in the matched cohort schools, a significantly larger portion of teachers in the ELT schools report that their students were serious about their school work. (See Figure 7.)

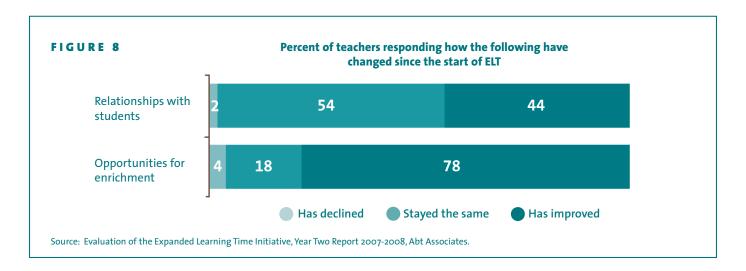




Source: Evaluation of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative, Year Two Report 2007-2008, Abt Associates.

There may be several causes for improved student motivation, but two vital reasons are likely: first, the expansion of what are typically characterized as extra-curricular activities, and second, deepened relationships with adults. Specifically, an overwhelming majority of students (78 percent) now have expanded opportunities to practice skills and tap interests that may fall outside the bounds

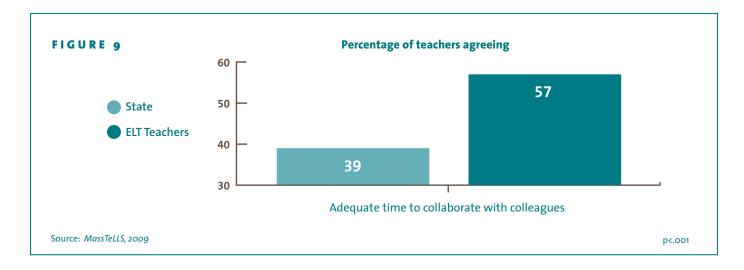
of traditional academic classes through an array of enrichment classes. Far from being "extras," research shows these activities often have a marked effect on motivation in other classes. Additionally, a solid proportion (44 percent) also have stronger relationships with teachers, which is generally acknowledged to be a key driver in promoting students' attachment to school. (See Figure 8.)



ELT Teachers cite benefits for teachers such as collaborative planning time.

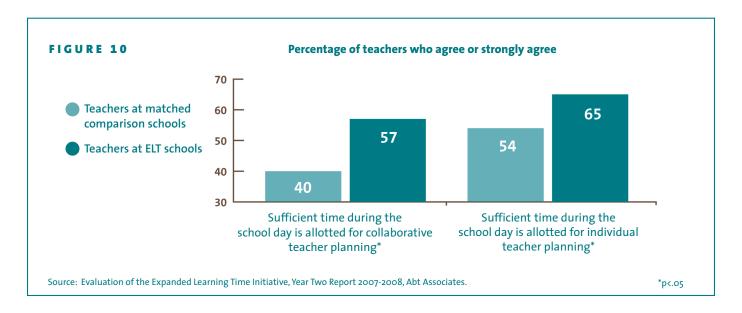
In addition to the benefits for students, teachers at ELT schools consistently report that expanded learning time allows them to develop their work and grow in their profession. According to findings from the Abt Associates evaluation, teachers in an ELT school have, on average, nearly an hour more per week to meet with their colleagues compared

to the matched cohort schools. Teachers use this time to plan lessons jointly; to share effective instructional strategies; and to assess student achievement data in order to understand, diagnose, and address student needs. As a result of this structured time, teachers at ELT schools were more likely to agree on the MassTeLLS survey that they had sufficient time to collaborate than were teachers at non-ELT schools. (Figure 9.)



The Abt Associates evaluation showed similar findings, noting a statistically significant difference in the percent of teachers in ELT schools and matched comparison schools who believe there is sufficient time in the school day for collaborative

teacher planning. Teachers at ELT schools also expressed a higher level of satisfaction with the amount of individual planning time afforded by their school schedule. (Figure 10.)



Together, these expanded opportunities for peer collaboration and individual development help advance the professional culture of learning in the

schools which, in turn, helps teachers hone instructional practices that can have a real impact on learning.

ELT teachers are more satisfied with their career choice and with their experience of teaching, even as they acknowledge that a longer day can be more tiring.

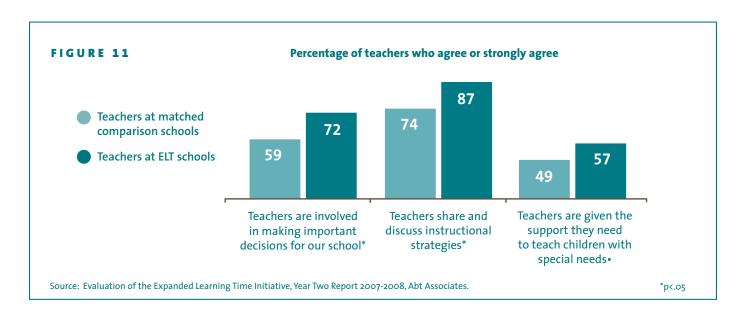
Teachers at ELT schools are more highly satisfied with work conditions at their school than teachers at matched comparison schools without ELT. For example, the data presented in Figure 10, below, depict teachers' perceptions of the teaching environment within their schools on a number of factors that correlate strongly with teacher job satisfaction. The differences in the level of

agreement between teachers at ELT schools and teachers at matched comparison schools are statistically significant (p<.05) for each of the factors presented in the chart. Since MassTeLLS revealed that nearly three in ten teachers believe that teacher empowerment is the work condition that contributes most to student learning (See Figure 1), the fact that more time, and the redesign that accompanies it, allows teachers to feel more secure and engaged in their work environments should be taken seriously as a benefit of the ELT Initiative. (See Figure 11.)

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

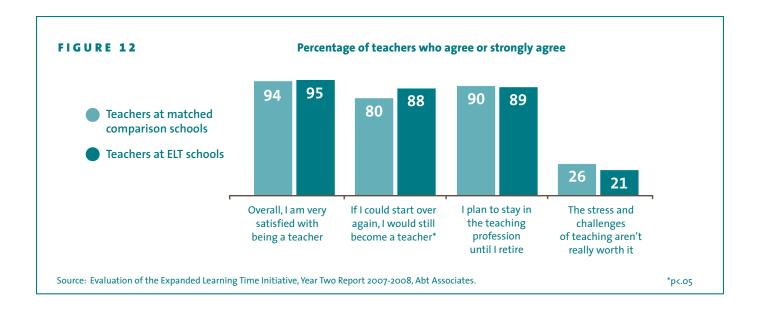
"Before ELT, if I wanted to meet with the Special Ed teacher or another teacher or coach it would be completely on the fly. Now I have a common planning time with my math coach, my intern, and with the Special Education staff, so everybody's on the same page and we all know what we're doing for the week ahead."

Christine Fetter,4th grade teacher, Martin Luther King Jr. School, Cambridge



Of course, more time in school also has some drawbacks. Teachers at ELT schools report they are tired and that the longer day can be demanding. Yet, even though as many as 57 percent of teachers believe teacher and staff fatigue has increased with expanded learning time, the change does not seem to have had a negative impact on their level of job satisfaction. Compared to their colleagues in

the matched cohort schools, ELT teachers were just as likely to be satisfied with being a teacher and, in fact, were significantly more likely to agree with the statement, "If I could start over again, I would still become a teacher" than teachers at matched comparison schools—a statistically significant difference (p<.05). (See Figure 12.)



Conclusion

ur student population is growing increasingly diverse and our world ever more complex. In response, we have justifiably raised learning standards considerably and insist that all students achieve proficiency in them. And yet, we unreasonably expect that greater learning will materialize within the very same school structure that has been in place for the last three or four generations. Quite simply, our schools and teachers are trying to meet the educational challenges of the 21st century while working in a model straight out of the 19th. Bound by the conventional school schedule of 180 six-hour days, teachers find it increasingly difficult to enable all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to gain the skills necessary for success in higher education and the workforce.

There are few education reforms where policy-makers, teachers, business and civic leaders, philanthropists, and the broad coalition of educators can agree. On the issue of learning time, however, a remarkable consensus is starting to emerge. From the corridors of Washington to the hallways of local schools, more and more people are acknowledging that the current amount of learning time is inadequate. If we are ever to reach our goal of universal proficiency, more time in school will be necessary, especially for disadvantaged students,

who typically lack sufficient access to the sort of learning supports that middle-class students take advantage of beyond the school day. There is perhaps no greater proof of the promise of expanded time than the testimony of educators who have experienced more time in class: They report largely positive effects on developing a sound professional culture and, in turn, on improving student learning.

Teachers throughout Massachusetts are clear on the need for more learning time and those teachers who have been afforded additional time through the Massachusetts ELT Initiative confirm the importance and value of this policy change. And teacher support continues to build across the state. In a recent survey of its members, the Massachusetts Teachers Association found that a strong majority (61 percent) favored extending the school day with appropriate compensation for the extra time. Teachers' voices, too often closed off from discussion over how to reform schools, are now speaking loudly and clearly about the need for more time.

NOTES

- ¹ The survey, conducted in March 2008, asked teachers about conditions of teaching and learning in their schools for the purpose of helping "schools and communities engage in ongoing and meaningful conversations about potential strategies to improve teaching and learning conditions." For more information, visit www.masstells.org.
- ² See Louis, K.S. & Marks, H.M. (1998, August). Does professional community affect the classroom? Teachers' work and student experiences at restructuring schools. *American Journal of Education*, 106(4), 532-575; Von Frank, V. (2009). Teacher learning turns school from F to A in one year. *The Learning Principal*, 4(6); and DuFour, R.P. and Eaker, R. (1998). Professional learning communities at work: best practices for enhancing student achievement. Alexandria: ASCD. See also Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.
- ³ See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2009). *Highlights from Education at a Glance*, 2008, pp. 74-75.
- ⁴ Only the 17 ELT schools with grades K-8 in operation at the time of survey—March 2008—are included in this analysis. These schools are:

District	School	Grades Served
Boston	Clarence Edwards James Timilty Umana Academy	6-8 6-8 6-8
Cambridge	Martin Luther King Jr. Fletcher Maynard Academy	PK – 8 PK – 8
Chicopee	Bowe	K-5
Fall River	North End-Silvia Osborn Matthew Kuss	K-5 K-5 6-8
Fitchburg	Academy Middle	5-8
Greenfield	Newton Greenfield Middle	K-4 5-8
Malden	Ferryway Salemwood	K-8 K-8
Worcester	Chandler Community City View Jacob Hiatt	PK – 6 PK – 6 PK – 6

The Boston Arts Academy, a pilot school in Boston, is the only high school in the ELT cohort. Teacher responses of this school—which were substantially similar to those of the other 17 schools—are not included in order to explore specifically the responses of teachers in grades K–8.

- ⁵ Abt also notes that: "Across schools, most teachers appreciated having more time for academics and reported feeling less rushed and more relaxed; many teachers commented that the pace of the day had improved. Teachers at multiple schools stated that they were able to go more in depth with their lessons, initiate richer conversations with students, and collaborate more with each other, even across disciplines."
- ⁶ See, for example, Eisner, E. (2002). Arts and the creation of mind. New Haven: Yale University and Jalongo, M.R. (2007). Beyond benchmarks and scores: Reasserting the role of motivation and interest in children's academic achievement—An ACEI Position Paper. *Childhood Education*, 83(6), 395-407.





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