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# The Legacy of More & Better Learning Time

Grantee and Stakeholder Reflections

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# The Legacy of More & Better Learning Time

Grantee and Stakeholder Reflections

## Key Findings and Background

From 2011 through 2015, the Ford Foundation was deeply engaged in a nationwide effort to support high-quality approaches to expand learning time. The purpose of Ford's More and Better Learning Time (MBLT) initiative was to reinvent public schools through more and better learning time in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty to equitably prepare students for college, careers, and civic participation.

To achieve this goal, the Ford Foundation made grants to community organizations, school districts, expanded learning time advocates, technical assistance providers, and several other education stakeholders. Some grantees were focused on demonstrating and/or scaling up MBLT in schools, using strategies such as increased learning time for students, expanded professional development and collaboration time for teachers, and greater student access to high-quality enrichment and career preparation programs. Other grantees focused on activities such as providing technical assistance, building capacity, conducting research and analysis, or advocating for and communicating about MBLT. While Ford did not limit grantees to any specific set of activities, all shared a common vision for improving student outcomes through MBLT.

To better understand the work of Ford Foundation grantees, CEP conducted a survey of grantees representing 60 organizations and schools and did case study interviews in three school districts — Denver Public Schools, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and Rochester City School District. We examined how, and under which conditions, MBLT activities, ideas, and approaches contributed to high-quality schools and more equitable opportunities for disadvantaged students. These experiences of Ford grantees and lessons learned will help not only those who are planning or implementing MBLT, but also those who are pursuing other education reforms intended to improve student outcomes.

### **Key Findings**

CEP's survey of Ford Foundation grantees and the case study work conducted in Rochester, Los Angeles, and Denver revealed both the elements associated with successful MBLT efforts and the challenges. Participants in the survey and case studies also shared examples of positive outcomes associated with their local MBLT efforts. However, not all of the grantees' MBLT efforts have been formally evaluated. And in case study sites that had data on improved student outcomes, it is not possible to attribute those outcomes specifically to MBLT for this study because of the various reforms underway at the same time.



## Successful<sup>1</sup> MBLT efforts shared many of these characteristics:

- Supportive and engaged school and/or district leaders
- A wide group of supportive stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and other important actors
- Effective collaborations with community groups that understand the local student and family population
- Ample planning time at the outset to structure the initiative correctly
- A dedicated funding stream for MBLT or related programs
- Flexibility and “wiggle room” to work around systemic obstacles

## Many MBLT efforts contributed to positive outcomes:

- Higher-quality instruction for disadvantaged students
- A greater choice of learning experiences for students
- More programs and services to meet student and community needs
- Access for students to a more robust array of caring adults and more individualized attention
- Increased student engagement and attendance
- Improved student achievement
- Reduced student absenteeism
- Greater parent engagement
- More school partnerships with community organizations and businesses

## Many MBLT efforts faced common challenges:

- Inadequate or inconsistent funding to implement MBLT
- A lack of stable funding to sustain MBLT after grant money ends
- Restrictive teacher contracts and compensation policies
- Transportation and other school and district logistics

## Background, Methods, and Report Organization

### Survey of grantees

CEP created a survey that asked participants about their experiences with and perceptions of the Ford Foundation’s MBLT initiative. Because Ford funded a diverse range of MBLT grantees, participants were asked as part of the survey to identify which of four categories best represented their role with respect to MBLT:

- *On-the-ground* grantees worked with or in schools, districts, and other organizations to build capacity for and implement MBLT strategies
- *Research* grantees studied MBLT strategies, policies, systems, and implementation

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<sup>1</sup> Because MBLT efforts vary greatly in their activities and intent, and because their successes (or failures) are judged by different measures, CEP did not define “successful” MBLT programs, activities, or schools. Instead, survey respondents and interviewees responded to questions using personal definitions of MBLT success.

- *Advocacy and educative* grantees, referred to simply as “advocacy grantees” in this report, promoted MBLT strategies and policies and/or educated stakeholders and the community about MBLT
- *Media and communication* grantees reported on or documented MBLT strategies

Depending on how the participants classified their Ford Foundation grant work, they received different surveys — the exception is that on-the-ground and research grantees received identical surveys. A total of 65 grantees from 60 different organizations — a large majority of all the Ford MBLT grantees — completed our survey.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, we refer to survey respondents as “grantees.”

### **Case studies in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester**

CEP conducted one-hour interviews and compiled relevant documents for three districts that the Ford Foundation considered to be of high interest for the study (see **box A** for key district information). We spoke with 17 individuals in the three districts who had an affiliation with MBLT activities. Ford recommended many of the interviewees CEP spoke with, but some were contacted based on recommendations from other interviewees. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify major themes within each of the three districts, as well as thematic similarities and differences among districts. Case study reports for all three districts are available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

## **Box A. MBLT in Case Study Districts**

### **Denver Public Schools**

In Denver Public Schools, MBLT was often a school-initiated effort. The district office established an expanded learning opportunity (ELO) pilot program that provided some guidance and funding for MBLT-like activities. At the time of this report, 11 schools continued to receive district funds for their ELO programs. Some Denver schools have also implemented MBLT activities using the flexibility in scheduling and personnel decisions provided by the state of Colorado’s Innovation Schools Act; before changes in these Innovation schools could be implemented, changes had to be approved by the school’s teachers and staff.

### **Los Angeles Unified School District**

Three school reform programs have been particularly important for MBLT activities in LAUSD. Linked Learning, a state pilot program and a districtwide initiative of LAUSD, integrates academic education with career and technical education and reconfigures the school day to allow more time for students to participate in career preparation experiences.

*continued >*

<sup>2</sup> There are more respondents than grantee organizations because 1) participants were invited to take the survey more than once, if they considered their work to fall within two or more classifications, and 2) multiple people from the same organization took the survey.

The other two programs are community schools, which provide a range of services to families during and after school hours, and Promise Neighborhoods, which focus on transforming distressed communities. Many of the MBLT reforms enacted in LAUSD were implemented in high schools.

### ***Rochester City School District***

With encouragement from the district's former superintendent Bolgen Vargas and other key leaders and stakeholders, the Rochester City School District initiated a pilot program for expanded learning time (ELT) in low-performing schools. The district followed the model of the National Center on Time and Learning, which calls for 300 additional school hours. More cohorts of ELT schools were added in subsequent years.

While the Ford Foundation grantees and case study districts include a diversity of organizations and approaches to MBLT, they are not intended to be representative of MBLT or expanded learning initiatives across the country. More details about the study methods and the Ford Foundation MBLT initiative can be found in the appendix to this report, posted at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

## ***Organization of this report***

The report is divided into seven sections that represent the major themes of both the survey and case studies and a concluding section on lessons learned:

- Policies and programs
- Planning
- Leadership
- Stakeholder support
- Equity
- Outcomes
- Challenges
- Lessons learned

Not all of the questions in the survey or all of the information collected in the case studies are represented in these themes. The appendix contains the complete survey responses for all of the questions, including the open-ended responses, and can be found at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org). Case study narratives for Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester are also available on CEP's website. We encourage readers who are interested in a specific district, survey question, or category of grantee to look at the appendix and case study reports.



# Policies and Programs

## Main Findings about Policies and Programs

- Policies and programs at the state and district level have had a significant impact on efforts to advance MBLT. In many places, both state and local policies played a key role in how MBLT is structured and implemented.
- Survey respondents and case study interviewees described several policies and programs that encouraged and supported MBLT. Examples include district initiatives for an expanded school day; state legislation giving certain schools more flexibility over curricula, personnel, and school organization; and various programs for school-community collaborations to expand after-school and in-school services to students and families.
- Existing policies and the unwillingness of some policy makers and administrators to think beyond traditional structures and practices often created barriers for MBLT. Examples include restrictive teacher hiring policies and workday compensation requirements, inflexible transportation policies, and rules governing interventions in low-performing schools.

## Survey Data

Two-thirds (67%) of the Ford Foundation’s on-the-ground survey participants, as well as 64% of advocacy grantees and 47% of research grantees, said that specific policies or programs to support their MBLT efforts were in place at the **district** level. However, substantial proportions of these grantees said that other district policies or programs created challenges for MBLT. Sixty-one percent of on-the-ground grantees, 46% of advocacy grantees, and 47% of research grantees gave this response.

Sixty-one percent of on-the-ground grantees, 57% of advocates, and 47% of researchers said that **state** policies or programs were in place to support their MBLT efforts. Fewer of these grantees (39% on-the-ground, 43% advocacy, and 40% research) indicated that state policies presented challenges to MBLT.

Many respondents, particularly in the research group, were not sure whether there were policies at either the state or district level to support or challenge their MBLT efforts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Research participants generally selected “not sure” responses at a higher percentage than on-the-ground participants. This discrepancy might be due to a narrower focus on MBLT activities based on the research proposal or because researchers are more hesitant to make a definitive claim without plenty of empirical evidence.



## Examples of Supporting and Challenging Policies from the Survey and Case Studies

In an open-ended survey question, we asked on-the-ground, research, and advocacy grantees to give examples of district or state policies and programs that supported or challenged their MBLT activities.<sup>4</sup> The case studies also yielded detailed information about how MBLT is shaped by policies and programs. Below are some of the many examples of supportive and challenging policies provided by survey respondents and case study interviewees.

### Examples of district policies that supported MBLT efforts

- As a result of an extended school day policy adopted by the Newark Public Schools, 14 schools are offering a longer school day. “Our work seeks to empower parents to take part in planning MBLT initiatives in those schools, and to share the promising practices they identify across schools to ensure a more equitable implementation of ELT,” said an advocacy grantee.
- The MBLT work in Hartford, Connecticut, built on existing district policies encouraging school-community partnerships and community schools.
- According to a research grantee, policies that support “staff dedicated to coordinating the work of schools and school partners” have helped to advance MBLT efforts in California school districts.
- Boston Public Schools extended the teacher day by 40 minutes for a subset of schools.

### Examples of district policies that challenged MBLT efforts

- “New York City’s emphasis on standardized test results and school progress reports often left little room for work beyond math and reading instruction,” said an advocacy grantee.
- District interventions for struggling schools are “prescriptive enough that they interfered with our usual approach” said an on-the-ground grantee. “We had to help change those in order to apply different interventions or supports.”
- District transportation policies that do not allow for MBLT have created challenges for schools.
- “Zero tolerance policies” create challenges by excluding students from learning time, according to an advocacy grantee.

### Examples of state policies that supported MBLT efforts

- Massachusetts has a statewide Expanded Learning Time initiative and “‘receivership’ legislation that requires the lowest-performing schools to expand time as a part of their turnaround,” according to an on-the-ground grantee.
- California’s Linked Learning pilot program began making grants in the 2012-13 school year. Los Angeles Unified School District was awarded Linked Learning pilot status, which brought \$86,250 in state funds over a period of two years.<sup>5</sup>

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4 While the survey did not ask participants about federal policies, some grantees folded federal policies or programs, such as School Improvement Grants, into their local and state responses.

5 California Department of Education. (2015, October 27). Linked Learning Pilot Program (AB 790). Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=3470>. California Department of Education. (2014, December 9). Linked Learning Pilot Programs (AB 790). Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/profile.asp?id=3658>.

- California also passed legislation that placed “a much greater focus on program quality” for state and federally funded after-school programs, according to an advocacy grantee. “This provided an opportunity to shift the focus at the local level from test score change to a more holistic approach to expanded learning time.”
- New York State’s Extended Learning Time initiative provides grants to extend the school day or year by at least 25% to help improve academic achievement schoolwide. According to an advocacy grantee, the naming of a specific Expanded Learning Time team within New York’s Office of School Support also raised visibility and staffing for MBLT.
- In addition, New York used its federal waiver of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to require districts applying for a School Improvement Grant (SIG) to expand their academic school year by 200 hours for all students in SIG schools.
- Colorado’s Innovation Schools Act gives certain schools a greater degree of autonomy over curricula, personnel decisions, and school organization and schedules, thus allowing principals to expand school hours and use more flexible teacher hiring practices.

### *Examples of state policies that challenged MBLT efforts*

- State policies for certification of teachers and state assessments “made it harder to be more innovative in thinking about the role of teachers and the experiences adults were able to create for students,” said an on-the-ground grantee.
- State testing policies created challenges for the type of curriculum that was used, and state evaluations of teachers based on student test scores “created pressures to use MBLT to teach to the test,” said a researcher.

Some grantees also mentioned federal policies that facilitated their MBLT efforts, as described in **Box B**.

### **Box B. Federal Policies That Support MBLT**

Federal waivers of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act allowed grantees who received 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) funds to use these grants to expand learning time during the school day. Previously, 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants were limited to supporting academic enrichment during non-school hours. New York and Colorado are among the states that asked for and received this flexibility. Case study interviewees explained how this policy made it possible for some 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grantees to support in-school instruction as part of an MBLT effort.

Federal School Improvement Grants were also used to support MBLT, according to interviewees. Under federal SIG guidance, a state’s lowest-performing schools had to adopt one of four models to target resources to improve student outcomes. Two of these models, turnaround and transformation, included requirements for schools to redesign their schedules to make additional time for student learning; the turnaround model also required increased time for teacher collaboration.



# Planning

## Main Findings about Planning

- The leaders, teachers, and staff of schools considering MBLT were very important players in planning for MBLT efforts, according to grantees. Community organizations were also important.
- Good planning was crucial to an effective MBLT redesign. Some districts required schools to engage in planning with their teachers and community stakeholders as a condition for receiving funds to expand learning time.
- Planning was an ongoing process in successful MBLT efforts. To sustain MBLT, grantees revised their plans in response to changing schools and new knowledge. Planning for how to fund MBLT over a long time was also a critical part of the process.

## Survey Data

A majority of **on-the-ground grantees** cited several entities as playing a “very important” role in the planning stage of MBLT, including school leadership (100%), the grantees’ organization<sup>6</sup> (83%), the school’s teachers and other staff (82%), and the Ford Foundation (53%). (See **table 1.**) Significant pluralities of on-the-ground grantees also considered other entities to be very important in planning, including community organizations (47%), district staff (41%), other foundations (35%), and federal, state, and local policy makers (31%).

A majority of **research grantees** (see **table 2**) agreed with on-the-ground grantees that school leadership (69%) and teachers and other school staff (54%) played a very important role in planning. But a higher percentage of research grantees than of on-the-ground grantees considered community organizations (58%) to be very important in planning. In addition, larger percentages of research grantees were “not sure” whether particular entities were important in planning, compared with on-the-ground grantees.

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<sup>6</sup> For on-the-ground grantees, “my organization” represented school districts and school networks, community organizations, and national organizations.



**Table 1. Views of on-the-ground grantees about the importance of various entities in the planning stage of MBLT**

Entity	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not sure
School leadership	100%	0%	0%	0%
My organization	83%	17%	0%	0%
School teachers and/or other school staff	82%	18%	0%	0%
The Ford Foundation	53%	35%	0%	12%
Community organizations	47%	29%	18%	6%
District staff	41%	29%	18%	12%
Other foundations	35%	41%	12%	12%
Policy makers (federal, state, local)	31%	31%	31%	6%
Parents	29%	59%	12%	0%

**Table reads:** Among the on-the-ground respondents who said that school leadership was applicable to MBLT planning, 100% indicated that school leadership was very important for planning MBLT activities.

**Note:** See the appendix for the entire set of responses to this question.

**Table 2. Views of research grantees about the importance of various entities in the planning stage of MBLT**

Entity	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not sure
School leadership	69%	8%	8%	15%
Community organizations	58%	17%	0%	25%
School teachers and/or other school staff	54%	31%	8%	8%
My organization	40%	20%	40%	0%
District staff	31%	38%	8%	23%
Network partners	25%	25%	17%	33%

**Table reads:** Among the research respondents who said that school leadership was applicable to MBLT planning, 69% indicated that school leadership was very important for planning MBLT activities.

**Note:** See the appendix for the entire set of responses to this question.

Preparing to sustain programs after grant funding ends is another critical aspect of planning. The survey asked grantees whether they had a long-term funding strategy in place for maintaining MBLT activities in the schools they worked with (on-the-ground and research respondents), or for maintaining their work to promote MBLT strategies and educate stakeholders about MBLT after Ford Foundation funding ended (advocacy respondents).

As shown in **table 3**, 57% of advocacy grantees, 44% of on-the-ground grantees, and just 13% of research grantees reported that the schools with which they worked had a long-term funding strategy. The remainder did not have a strategy or were not sure.

**Table 3. Plans for funding MBLT activities long-term**

	On-the-ground	Research	Advocacy
Yes	44%	13%	57%
No	39%	27%	25%
Not sure	17%	60%	18%

**Table reads:** Forty-four percent of on-the-ground grantees said that the schools or entities with which they worked had a long-term funding strategy in place.

## Planning in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester

Interviewees in the Denver and Rochester case studies identified many of the same players cited by survey grantees as important to the planning stage of MBLT. Los Angeles interviewees did not discuss MBLT planning in detail.

In Denver, the planning stage facilitated broad support for MBLT by giving stakeholders an opportunity to voice their opinions. Todd Ely, a University of Colorado at Denver professor, highlighted how the planning requirements for Innovation schools helped secure support from teachers (see the Stakeholder Support section for more on this topic). Principal Alex Magaña of Grant Beacon Middle School similarly said he used the school's Innovation plan to make sure all his teachers and staff members were on-board with the MBLT plan: "I rolled it [the MBLT funding proposal] into my Innovation plan. This was not an opt-in/opt-out. It had to be all or none."

Denver's Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) grantees were required to plan for implementation *and* sustainability. An ELO report explained that the sustainability plans were "part of an effort to ensure that each school's ELO plan would outlive and withstand economic downturn, leadership turnover and other transitions and hardships."<sup>7</sup> Samantha Olson added that when her organization, the Colorado Education Initiative, helped districts and schools plan MBLT activities, they focused on producing a plan that was sustainable and did not rely on extra funding.

<sup>7</sup> Denver Public Schools. (2014). *2014-2015 ELO renewal final report*, p. 10. Unpublished report.

Planning does not cease with implementation; planning is an ongoing endeavor, according to Denver interviewees. In Denver, schools with district-supported MBLT efforts were required to continually revisit their model to make sure they were meeting the needs of their students and community. Each year, the school community evolves, as students graduate to the next level, new students enter, and teachers and administrators move in or out of the school. Over the course of just a few years, these changes may result in a different community than the one that planned and implemented the MBLT program. Because of this turnover, said Tara Jahn of the Colorado Education Initiative, schools need to be lithe and make sure MBLT activities serve their current and incoming students:

*The families and students who were part of creating this plan, they felt ownership of the plan. They knew where it came from. They were happy it was part of their school day. But as those students moved on into other grades and other schools, they had an issue where new families didn't have that level of ownership over their school day and year. So, that realization, that sustainability, is also continuing to personalize for the students they have in the building, and be flexible to know and read what the crowd needs.*

In Rochester, schools interested in pursuing MBLT were required to submit plans to the district and, if approved, engage in a planning year. Several interviewees considered the planning time to be a crucial condition for successful MBLT implementation, as pointed out by Mairéad Hartmann of the Rochester Area Community Foundation:

*[Planning time gave schools] a full school year to really think about and plan for and be coached and trained in what the components and elements of a redesigned school day might include. And in the best circumstances, they've already identified a community partner that they have a history of working with, and that community partner has gone through the training with them, so that at the end of those five to eight months, the community partners, the school staff, the building leadership are all familiar with each other. They've created the plan together, and they are ready for implementation.*



# Leadership

## Main Findings about Leadership

- Survey respondents considered school leadership to be very important in planning and implementing MBLT efforts. Many respondents also noted the important roles played by teachers and community groups in MBLT activities.
- Case studies illustrated the specific leadership roles played by principals, community groups, school leadership teams, and district superintendents. For example, principals were critical in designing MBLT activities that acknowledge and balance the needs of teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Community organizations showed leadership by mobilizing parents, connecting with policy makers, and keeping the focus of MBLT on providing equity.

## Survey Data

A series of questions on the survey asked on-the-ground and research grantees about the importance of various entities in planning and implementing MBLT efforts. Grantees could say that a particular entity was “very important,” “somewhat important,” “not important,” “not sure,” or that the entity was “not applicable” to a particular stage of MBLT efforts. The tables below show the “very important” responses for some of the most commonly selected entities listed in the question.

As shown in **table 4**, 100% of *on-the-ground grantees* said that school leaders played a very important role in planning and implementing MBLT efforts. Large majorities of on-the-ground grantees also considered their own organization<sup>8</sup> and a school’s teachers and other staff to be very important during these stages. A majority of on-the-ground grantees considered the Ford Foundation to be very important to planning and implementing MBLT activities.

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<sup>8</sup> For on-the-ground grantees, “my organization” represented school districts and school networks, community organizations, and national organizations.



**Table 4. Entities that played a “very important” role in planning and implementing MBLT activities**

Entity	On-the-ground grantees		Research grantees	
	Planning	Implementing	Planning	Implementing
School leadership	100%	100%	69%	85%
My organization	83%	89%	40%	20%
School teachers and/or other school staff	82%	94%	54%	62%
The Ford Foundation	53%	50%	0%	0%
Community organizations	47%	41%	58%	42%
District staff	41%	44%	31%	38%

**Table reads:** Among on-the-ground respondents who said that school leadership was applicable to MBLT planning or implementation, 100% indicated that school leaders played a very important role in planning and implementing MBLT activities.

**Note:** See the appendix for the entire set of responses to this question.

As **table 4** also highlights, large majorities of **research grantees** viewed school leaders as very important players in MBLT planning (69%) and implementation (85%). A majority of research grantees considered community organizations to be very important in MBLT planning, and viewed school teachers and/or other school staff as very important during both the planning and implementation stages. Unlike on-the-ground grantees, none of the research grantees said the Ford Foundation played a very important role in the planning or implementing stages.

**Media grantees** also identified support from school and district leaders as a condition that fostered MBLT.

### **Leadership in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester**

The case studies corroborated the survey responses about the importance of leadership. Interviewees in Denver and Los Angeles talked about how school principals and community organizations provided leadership in planning, implementing, and sustaining MBLT efforts. In Rochester, district and school leaders were the main drivers of MBLT implementation, according to interviewees.

Regardless of who was heading the initiative, leaders needed to take certain actions for MBLT activities to be successful, according to interviewees in all case study sites. Specifically, they needed to have a clear sense of purpose, plan for implementation and sustainability, and consider their community’s needs.

#### **Principals**

Interviewees in all case study districts emphasized the need for strong principal leadership. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, Peter Rivera of the California Community Foundation said that principals are driving what MBLT activities look like in their schools. Principals

implementing MBLT have a major task in designing changes in scheduling to accommodate the needs of all stakeholders. They must increase time for students while avoiding teacher and student fatigue and coordinating community partners.

As Mairéad Hartmann of the Rochester Area Community Foundation pointed out, school leaders in successful Rochester schools were “able to really achieve buy-in with the teaching staff, and that certainly benefits everyone all around when teachers are willing to adjust their schedules ... and also understand the relationship with the community partners and their staff.”

### **Community organizations**

While the important role of community organizations was mentioned in all three locations, the strongest comments about their leadership came from interviewees in Los Angeles, where community organizations have been at the heart of MBLT. Community organizations in this district have helped to coordinate strong connections between school and education leaders and policy makers. According to Marisa Saunders of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, school leaders do not have the capacity to bring in MBLT activities alone. School leaders need to work with community partners who can mobilize parents and students and ensure that any adopted MBLT activities have an equity focus.

### **School leadership teams**

In the Denver Public Schools, some of the MBLT activities were guided by school leadership teams. Depending on the school, these teams consisted of different combinations of people, including teachers, parents, and students (in high school). The leadership teams ensured that teachers, parents, and high school students had a voice in the school’s direction when adopting an MBLT initiative.

### **District leadership**

District offices had varying levels of engagement with MBLT activities, depending on the district and the particular program. Los Angeles has a district office for the Linked Learning program, which integrates rigorous academics with career and technical education and other supports, but the district has no such office for community schools and Promise Neighborhoods, its two other MBLT-related initiatives. In Rochester, Bolgen Vargas, the former superintendent, and Adam Urbanski, president of the Rochester Teachers Association, were influential in adding instructional time in the district’s lowest-performing schools and bringing MBLT activities into some of the district’s schools. However, Vargas left the district in 2016, and the new superintendent may have other priorities. As Paul Hetland of the Rochester Teachers Association noted, “When new superintendents come in, they have new initiatives they want to push. The old initiatives exist, in some sense. There are people still advocating [for] them, but they are somewhat starved, and the new programs are getting more attention.”

Superintendent turnover was not limited to Rochester. In 2014, the average tenure of superintendents in the nation’s largest school districts is just over three years, according to a report by the Council of the Great City Schools.<sup>9</sup> The Challenges section of this report includes a more in-depth discussion of the effects on MBLT of turnover in school district leaders.

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<sup>9</sup> The Council of Great City Schools. (2014). *Urban school superintendents: Characteristics, tenure, and salary: Eighth survey and report*. Retrieved from [http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Urban%20Indicator\\_Superintendent%20](http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Urban%20Indicator_Superintendent%20)



# Stakeholder Support

## **Main Findings about Stakeholder Support**

- MBLT garnered strong support from several types of stakeholders, according to grantees and case study participants. Foundations, school leaders, school and district staff, the community, students, and parents were cited as among the most supportive of MBLT activities in successful schools.
- Some stakeholders, such as the business community and school boards, were viewed by on-the-ground and research grantees as less supportive.

## **Survey Data**

Large majorities of **on-the-ground grantees** reported that in the successful schools they worked with, the following groups were “very supportive” of MBLT activities: school leaders, teachers and support staff, and students.<sup>10</sup> (See the specific percentages of grantees in **table 5**.) A majority of on-the-ground grantees also said that community members and community groups, other foundations, and parents were very supportive of MBLT. Fewer grantees saw high levels of support for MBLT among business leaders, district leaders, policy makers, and school boards. Very few participants said that any of the stakeholder groups were unsupportive.

**Research grantees** in several cases agreed with on-the-ground grantees about which groups were very supportive of MBLT, although the percentages were smaller for research grantees. Half or more of the researchers cited community organizations, school leaders, and teachers and support staff as very supportive. (See **table 6**.) When the “somewhat supportive” and “very supportive” responses are considered together, then a majority of researchers also considered other foundations, community members, parents, district leaders, and policy makers to be supportive.

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<sup>10</sup> The Ford Foundation was listed as a stakeholder and was viewed as supportive by a large majority of on-the-ground grantees and a majority of research grantees. However, because the Ford Foundation’s support for MBLT may be considered a given, that response has been omitted from the discussion and the table. See the appendix for the complete responses.



**Table 5. Views of on-the-ground grantees about level of support for MBLT from key stakeholders**

Stakeholder	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Neutral	Somewhat unsupportive	Very unsupportive	Not sure
School leaders	76%	24%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Teachers and support staff	71%	24%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Students	67%	28%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Community members	61%	39%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other foundations	61%	33%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Parents	59%	29%	12%	0%	0%	0%
Community organizations	56%	39%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Local business and industry leaders	31%	44%	19%	0%	0%	6%
District leaders	24%	47%	24%	0%	0%	6%
Policy makers (federal, state, local)	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%	0%
School boards	19%	38%	25%	0%	6%	13%

**Table reads:** Of those on-the-ground grantees who reporting working with school leaders, 76% said that this group was very supportive of MBLT activities.

**Table 6. Views of research grantees about level of support for MBLT from key stakeholders**

Stakeholder	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Neutral	Somewhat unsupportive	Very unsupportive	Not sure
Community organizations	67%	17%	0%	0%	0%	17%
School leaders	62%	15%	8%	8%	0%	8%
Teachers and support staff	50%	17%	17%	8%	0%	8%
Other foundations	42%	25%	8%	0%	0%	25%
Community members	36%	27%	0%	0%	0%	36%
Parents	36%	27%	27%	0%	0%	9%
District leaders	33%	33%	0%	17%	0%	17%
Students	25%	25%	17%	0%	0%	33%
Policy makers (federal, state, local)	22%	33%	11%	11%	0%	22%
Local business and industry leaders	22%	11%	33%	0%	0%	33%
School boards	8%	42%	8%	0%	0%	42%

**Table reads:** Of the research grantees who indicated that their research examined the role of community organizations, 67% said that those organizations were very supportive of MBLT activities.

Sizable proportions of advocacy grantees identified community organizations (65%), other foundations (54%), and parents (50%) as supporting MBLT strategies.

## ***Stakeholder Support in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester***

The need to generate and sustain stakeholder support for MBLT activities was a central theme across the three case studies. In Denver, parents and community organizations were influential in the MBLT planning, adoption, and implementation processes. For example, Janet Lopez of Rose Community Foundation explained how families and school leaders collaborated to create an MBLT plan that worked for everyone at Grant Beacon Middle School. In this case, she said, there was community support from the start because community members were part of the process.

Todd Ely of the University of Colorado at Denver highlighted how the planning requirements for Innovation schools — schools granted a greater degree of flexibility under state law — helped secure the support of teachers. The “Innovation plan has to be voted on and approved by your teachers, and so to some degree, if you’re doing expanded time at an Innovation school, the teachers have already bought in, at least formally, by supporting the plan,” he said. Most of the Denver interviewees agreed that support from the school district is a necessary element in the efforts of parents and community organizations to effect systemic change.

Interviewees in Los Angeles noted that generating support from communities, schools, parents, and students was essential if MBLT activities were to continue in the future. “This school belongs to the community,” said Peter Rivera of the California Community Foundation. “You need to engage the community in any kind of reform efforts if they’re going to stick.”

However, sometimes little effort was made to engage the community, and MBLT activities were adopted in order to get attached funding. In such instances, according to David Rattray of Unite-LA, MBLT activities did not have transformative power because of the lack of support by key stakeholders. Rattray said he had seen some school leaders who did not have a deep commitment to MBLT and were not willing to reorganize their school’s whole education program. Instead, those leaders were “trying to do a one-off or something” and the MBLT programs did not take off.

In Rochester, former superintendent Vargas advised schools and districts that are considering implementing MBLT to garner stakeholder support. “You will have to engage the students and the families and the school community, the teachers, to buy into providing a student with more and better learning time,” he said. “From the principal, to central office, to the unions, there has to be a strong buy-in for this to work.”



# Equity

## **Main Findings about Equity**

- Survey and case study participants said that successful MBLT initiatives were motivated by a desire to address the needs of students in high-poverty neighborhoods. This is consistent with the Ford Foundation’s equity goal for the grants.
- The MBLT activities provided by grantees included expanded opportunities for academic instruction and student enrichment in high-poverty schools. According to on-the-ground grantees, their MBLT efforts contributed to more equitable access for disadvantaged students to diverse learning experiences, a more robust array of caring adults, and higher-quality instruction.
- Despite MBLT’s focus on low-income areas and generally strong parent support, some interviewees mentioned a few parents who did not want their children enrolled in schools with expanded time because these parents could provide engaging out-of-school enrichment for their children on their own.

## **Survey Data**

The Ford Foundation’s stated goal for the MBLT initiative was to reinvent public schools in high-poverty neighborhoods so that students were equitably prepared for college, careers, and civic participation. To better understand the relationship between MBLT initiatives and equity, grantees were asked about characteristics of MBLT activities aimed at increasing equity, such improved access to higher-quality instruction.

### ***Student achievement was the primary motivator for MBLT***

The survey asked all four groups of Ford grantees about motivations for implementing MBLT activities (they could give more than one response). In all groups, “a need to improve student



achievement” was selected by the largest percentage of respondents. The following percentages cited this as one of the motivations for MBLT:

- 100% of media respondents
- 93% of advocacy respondents
- 83% of on-the-ground respondents
- 80% of research respondents

### Equity-related contributions of MBLT

The survey also asked on-the-ground and research grantees if their MBLT activities contributed to a more equitable environment for disadvantaged students in schools; media participants received a similar question. As **table 7** shows, the **on-the-ground grantees** to whom this question was applicable reported that their MBLT efforts had improved access for disadvantaged students in these areas:

- Diverse learning experiences (82%)
- A more robust array/range of caring adults (81%)
- Higher-quality instruction (76%)

Each of the response items in table 7 was selected by more than 60% of on-the-ground grantees, and none of these grantees said that access to these benefits was less equitable as a result of MBLT.

**Table 7. Views of on-the-ground grantees about whether their MBLT activities contributed to access for disadvantaged students**

Type of access for disadvantaged students	More equitable	Same	Less equitable	Varies by school	Not sure
Access to diverse learning experiences (e.g., service learning projects, field trips, internships)	82%	0%	0%	0%	18%
Access to a more robust array/range of caring adults (teachers, community educators, mentors, coaches, counselors, etc.)	81%	0%	0%	0%	19%
Access to higher-quality instruction	76%	6%	0%	0%	18%
Access to well-rounded enrichment experiences (arts, music, STEM, sports, dance, etc.)	73%	7%	0%	0%	20%
Access to a safe learning environment	69%	6%	0%	6%	19%
Access to wraparound services or integrated student supports like health, mental health, and other child/family support services	67%	0%	0%	7%	27%
Access to diverse academic programs (IB, AP, honors, and/or career and technical education courses)	63%	13%	0%	0%	25%

**Table reads:** Of the on-the-ground respondents who reported that access to diverse learning experiences was applicable to their work, 82% said these opportunities were more equitable in schools and entities with MBLT programs.

Compared with on-the-ground grantees, greater proportions of *researchers* (not shown in the table) said they were “not sure” about the impact of MBLT on access for disadvantaged students. For example, while 31% of researchers said that access to higher-quality instruction was more equitable for students in successful MBLT programs, 62% were not sure on this point. Still, no research participant said that access was less equitable for any response item.

## ***Equity in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester***

Interviewees in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester said that their districts and schools implemented MBLT initiatives to improve student achievement. For example, Maria Brenes of the community group InnerCity Struggle said that Los Angeles schools adopted MBLT activities as one strategy for overcoming a series of education and social injustices, including the school-to-prison pipeline. In Rochester, former superintendent Bolgen Vargas said that MBLT was a key approach for closing opportunity gaps between Rochester City public schools and their nearby suburban counterparts.

The emphasis on educational equity went beyond academic instruction to include enrichment activities. Several interviewees described how their MBLT efforts gave students access to arts, music, sports, and drama — even if these activities were not closely aligned with students’ academic time. An essential component of Linked Learning in Los Angeles included work-based learning, which took students out of the classroom and provided them with real-world experiences. Todd Ely of the University of Colorado at Denver said that enrichment activities in the Denver Public Schools provided disadvantaged students with valuable learning experiences that were not previously available to them.

Tara Jahn of the Colorado Education Initiative, which works on education innovation in Denver, noted that MBLT was not supported by all stakeholders. Specifically, parents who could afford enrichment-type activities through private providers were not in favor of longer school days, weeks, or years for their children. Jahn described this as an “equity conflict” and explained that at least one principal decided to not adopt MBLT activities because more resourced families might leave the school.



# Outcomes

## ***Main Findings about Outcomes***

- Many grantees and some case study sites reported higher student achievement, better student attendance, and improved student engagement in the schools they worked with. However, not all of the MBLT grant programs have been formally evaluated. And even in sites with improved student achievement or graduation rates, it was not possible in this study to attribute these gains specifically to MBLT because of many reforms underway at the same time.
- The MBLT initiative has had an impact beyond student academic outcomes, according to Ford Foundation grantees. Many survey respondents, as well as case study participants, reported improvements in school climate and culture, student enrichment opportunities and services, collaboration time for teachers, and connections between schools and communities.
- Another set of positive outcomes mentioned by case study participants was the growing awareness of and demand for MBLT activities as a school improvement tool and the sharing of ideas and strategies for MBLT.

## ***Survey Data***

We asked on-the-ground and research survey respondents whether MBLT approaches had contributed to higher, steady, or lower performance on various indicators in the schools they worked with. These two groups of grantees were also asked their views about positive impacts of MBLT in their target schools in three broad areas: school climate; classroom teaching and learning; and school, family, and community engagement. Advocacy grantees were asked a somewhat different survey question about the extent to which various outcomes had occurred in the communities where they promoted or provided information about MBLT.



## On-the-ground and research grantees

When asked whether performance was higher, steady, or lower in their schools as a result of implementing MBLT ideas and approaches, large majorities of **on-the-ground grantees** said MBLT had contributed to higher performance on the following indicators (see **table 8**):

- Community partnerships (88%)
- Student engagement (82%)
- Community engagement in school activities (76%)
- Student attendance (65%)

In addition, more than half indicated that MBLT contributed to improved student graduation rates (60%), teacher collaboration (59%), and student test scores (53%).

A majority of **research respondents** said that MBLT implementation has contributed to higher levels of teacher collaboration (58%) and community partnerships (54%).

**Table 8. Percentage of grantees reporting higher performance on school indicators as a result of MBLT implementation**

Indicator	On-the-ground	Research
Community partnerships	88%	54%
Student engagement	82%	42%
Community engagement in school activities	76%	46%
Student attendance	65%	25%
Student graduation rates	60%	42%
Teacher collaboration	59%	58%
Student test scores	53%	25%
Student postsecondary enrollment rates	40%	8%
Student retention rates	24%	33%
Teacher retention	18%	8%

**Table reads:** Of the on-the-ground respondents who indicated that student engagement was applicable to their MBLT work with schools or other entities, 82% reported higher levels of student engagement since implementation of MBLT.

**Note:** See the appendix for the entire set of responses to this question.

**On-the-ground grantees** also reported a variety of other positive impacts of MBLT in the schools they worked with (see **table 9**). In the area of school climate, half of the on-the-ground grantees cited reductions in student absenteeism, and 44% reported reductions in student discipline referrals. In the area of classroom teaching and learning, nearly three-fourths (72%) of on-the-ground grantees said that student engagement increased, half said that student achievement improved, and 44% indicated that teachers were more collaborative. Well above half of the on-the-ground grantees said that more partnerships were formed between the school and other community organizations (72%) and that parents and families were more engaged with and supportive of the school (61%).

Greater proportions of **researchers** said they were “not sure” about positive impacts of MBLT in these areas, compared with on-the-ground respondents, and their open-ended comments suggested this was because they had not yet completed their research or had not studied a particular outcome. Still, research grantees identified some notable positive impacts in the schools they worked with. More than half (53%) said teachers were more collaborative. One-third (33%) of researchers reported increased student engagement and more partnerships between community organizations and schools as outcomes of MBLT efforts, and 27% cited improved student achievement and an increase in programs, services, and caring adults for students.

**Table 9. Percentage of grantees reporting various positive impacts of MBLT**

Indicator	On-the-ground	Research
<b>School Climate</b>		
Student absenteeism was reduced	50%	13%
Student discipline referrals were reduced	44%	13%
Teacher absenteeism was reduced	6%	0%
No positive impacts related to school climate	0%	0%
Not sure	17%	67%
<b>Classroom teaching and learning</b>		
Student engagement increased	72%	33%
Student achievement improved	50%	27%
Teachers were more collaborative	44%	53%
Teacher assumed more leadership roles	22%	0%
Teachers reported higher satisfaction with classroom teaching experience (if teacher surveys were used)	6%	7%
Teacher retention rates increased	0%	7%
Students reported higher satisfaction with classroom learning experience (if student surveys were used)	17%	0%
No positive impacts related to classroom teaching and learning	0%	0%
Not sure	11%	33%
<b>School, family, community engagement</b>		
Parents and family were more engaged with and supportive of the school	61%	20%
More partnerships formed between school and other community organizations	72%	33%
School culture was enriched by increasing programs, services, and caring adults available to students	50%	27%
Community members were more engaged and supportive of the school	44%	20%
No positive impacts related to school, family, and community engagement	0%	7%
Not sure	6%	47%

**Table reads:** Fifty percent of on-the-ground grantees said that student absenteeism was reduced in schools and entities implementing MBLT activities.

## Advocacy grantees

Advocacy grantees also reported that MBLT activities had contributed to positive outcomes in the communities where they promoted or provided information about MBLT. (See **table 10**.) Although a minority of advocates said that any of the outcomes listed had occurred to a “great” extent, sizeable shares reported a “moderate” impact. Thus, a majority of advocates reported at least a moderate positive impact for several outcomes: community partnerships (both the number and quality), enrichment opportunities, before- and after-school programs, student engagement, better use of learning time, and attention to social-emotional needs.

Noteworthy shares of advocates — in many cases, between one-fourth and one-half — were unsure if a particular outcome had occurred.

**Table 10. Percentage of advocacy grantees reporting extent to which various outcomes occurred in communities where they promoted MBLT**

Outcome	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	Not at all	Not sure
Greater number of community partnerships	33%	33%	14%	0%	19%
More before/after-school enrichment opportunities	27%	27%	23%	0%	23%
Higher quality community partnerships	27%	36%	14%	0%	23%
Increased student engagement	24%	29%	24%	0%	24%
More before/after-school program offerings	23%	36%	14%	0%	27%
Better use of learning time	18%	50%	14%	0%	18%
More attention to students' social-emotional needs	18%	45%	23%	0%	14%
More in-school program offerings	18%	27%	23%	0%	32%
Increased teacher collaboration	14%	27%	14%	0%	45%
Improved student achievement, as measured by grades or other classroom evidence	10%	40%	15%	0%	35%
More effective classroom instruction	9%	27%	5%	0%	59%
Increased time for teacher planning and professional development	5%	48%	19%	0%	29%
Improved student achievement, as measured by test scores	5%	35%	25%	5%	30%
Teacher retention	5%	5%	5%	0%	84%
More summer school enrichment opportunities	5%	29%	14%	10%	43%
More summer school program offerings	5%	25%	15%	5%	50%

**Table reads:** Of the advocacy grantees who said that community partnerships were applicable to their work, 33% reported that these partnerships had increased in number to a great extent.

## ***MBLT Outcomes in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester***

In all three case study districts, some interviewees cautioned against attributing either positive or negative changes solely to MBLT implementation. Instead, they emphasized that MBLT is one of many improvement strategies adopted by schools, as illustrated by this comment from Janet Lopez with Rose Community Foundation in Denver:

*We can point to a number of schools that are seeing some positive academic achievement results, and MBLT is a component of their school. But, I think the harder part is, is MBLT on its own the reason that we're seeing such positive impacts in the school? And I would say no, it's an element. There is no silver bullet. It's one piece of the puzzle of really high-functioning schools serving kids in poverty.*

Still, interviewees across study sites reported improved outcomes in schools that adopted MBLT. For the most part, these outcomes aligned with those identified in the survey: improved student academic performance, greater opportunities for enrichment, and increased teacher collaboration. An additional outcome mentioned by case study participants is the growing awareness of and demand for MBLT activities as a school improvement tool.

### ***Student academic outcomes***

Interviewees in all three districts pointed to improved academic outcomes in MBLT-adopting schools. In Rochester, for example, interviewees mentioned a study by the district office that used matched pairs of students to examine the impacts of MBLT on reading and math scores. The study found that the districts' first cohort of schools with expanded learning time had higher reading and math growth on the state assessment.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, differences in growth were statistically significant.

Denver interviewees mentioned one study that compared students attending expanded learning time schools in the southwest quadrant and students attending schools with traditional schedules. The students in ELT schools had higher scores, but the differences were not statistically significant.<sup>12</sup>

Los Angeles interviewees cited decreased dropout rates, improved graduation rates, and other districtwide improvements as positive impacts of MBLT implementation.

### ***Non-academic student outcomes***

Increased enrichment activities, particularly for disadvantaged students, was one of the greatest outcomes of the MBLT initiative according to Denver case study participants. Some interviewees noted that enrichment activities have not only increased equity but have also improved student outcomes. Incorporating enrichment opportunities into the school day can expand the activities available to disadvantaged students, who previously may have lacked access to enrichment outside of school hours, said Todd Ely of the University of Colorado at Denver.

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11 Rochester City School District. (2015). *Ongoing analysis of year 3 in expanded learning schools: Focused on TIME Collaborative, 300-hour model*. Unpublished report.

12 Padres & Jóvenes Unidos. (2015). *Extended learning time in Southwest Denver*.

In Los Angeles, the three school reform programs — Linked Learning, community schools, and Promise Neighborhoods — expand non-academic services. Linked Learning provides students with career preparation experiences, including career and technical education and work-based learning. Students in Linked Learning schools also have access to integrated supports. The community schools and Promise Neighborhood initiatives are designed to make schools the center of the community. Although the specific services vary according to the needs of a particular community, these programs often provide enrichment opportunities and social-emotional services for students and community members.

In Rochester, interviewees noted a variety of positive student changes, including the following:

- Increased social-emotional learning and engagement
- More comfortable and happy students
- Decreased discipline referrals and student absenteeism

### **Teacher outcomes**

In the three case studies, interviewees also said that the environments for teachers had improved in schools that embraced MBLT. Chief among the teacher outcomes mentioned was increased collaboration. For example, Paul Hetland of the Rochester Teachers Association said that MBLT has fostered a more collaborative environment in adopting schools. Denver Public Schools has made increased time for teacher collaboration and planning a central tenet of its MBLT efforts.

In Los Angeles, Marissa Saunders of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform said that teachers who have experienced increased collaboration through one of the district's three reform programs now cannot imagine working in an environment without a high degree of collaboration.

### **Growing demand for MBLT**

Some interviewees described how successful MBLT initiatives could have an impact by spreading awareness and knowledge of MBLT from school to school, district to district, and across the country.

In Denver, Rose Community Foundation hosted a “Seeing Is Believing” tour so that school leaders from around the state could witness the positive effects of MBLT; that tour visited Grant Beacon, among other schools. The principal of Grant Beacon said he learned about MBLT after reading about expanded learning time in a Boston school.

Rochester district officials, education leaders, and the Greater Rochester After-school Alliance saw the potential of MBLT activities in Providence, Rhode Island, before they considered implementing their own MBLT initiative. Mairéad Hartmann of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, who was on the trip, said the experience gave participants a first-hand understanding of MBLT. “One really compelling component of what we learned when we visited Providence was about how they were doing joint professional development and how they were bringing community partners into school settings to essentially co-teach with the teaching staff,” she explained. Former Rochester superintendent Bolgen Vargas and union leader Adam Urbanski also visited expanded learning time schools in Cincinnati, Ohio.



# Challenges

## ***Main Findings about Challenges***

- Money was a challenge in implementing and sustaining MBLT, according to all four groups of Ford Foundation grantees and case study participants.
- Additional challenges included compensating teachers and school staff for additional time required for MBLT, coordinating transportation and other logistics, and hiring qualified teachers and staff, among others.
- The experience of the case study districts showed that some of these challenges can be overcome with flexibility and a willingness to collaborate and think creatively.

## ***Survey Data***

### ***Implementation challenges***

Among ***on-the-ground grantees***, securing fiscal resources for MBLT was very (67%) or somewhat (33%) challenging to their efforts to implement MBLT. Other issues that were at least somewhat challenging, according to large majorities of on-the-ground grantees, included compensating teachers for additional time; logistical challenges such as coordinating transportation; compensating other staff for additional time; hiring qualified teachers; and developing or maintaining district and school policies and services to support student needs. The specific response percentages for this question are shown in **table 11**.



**Table 11. Percentage of on-the-ground grantees reporting various challenges to implementing MBLT**

Challenge	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Varies by school	Not sure
Securing fiscal resources for MBLT	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
Compensating teachers for additional time	39%	50%	6%	6%	0%
Logistical challenges such as coordinating transportation	39%	44%	6%	6%	6%
Compensating other staff for additional time	33%	50%	11%	6%	0%
Hiring qualified teachers	22%	50%	6%	22%	0%
Developing or maintaining district/school policies and services that support student needs	22%	67%	6%	0%	6%
Student fatigue	18%	41%	24%	12%	6%
Hiring qualified staff	17%	50%	17%	17%	0%
Retaining teachers	11%	56%	11%	11%	11%
Teacher/staff fatigue	11%	67%	6%	0%	17%
Managing outside staff and volunteers	11%	39%	22%	22%	6%
Maintaining community partnerships	11%	44%	22%	22%	0%
District/school leadership support of MBLT	11%	67%	11%	6%	6%
Building public awareness and support	11%	56%	28%	0%	6%

**Table reads:** Of the on-the-ground respondents who indicated that securing fiscal resources for implementing MBLT was applicable to the schools in which they worked, 67% reported that this activity was very challenging.

Securing fiscal resources for MBLT was considered very challenging by nearly half (45%) of **research grantees**, while another 27% said it was somewhat challenging, as shown in **table 12**. A majority of research grantees also reported that the schools they worked with faced challenges in developing or maintaining policies and services to support students' needs and coordinating logistics such as transportation.

In addition, three of the four **media grantees** said that inadequate funding for MBLT was a challenge to MBLT implementation in the communities they covered in their reporting. Two mentioned logistical challenges such as coordinating transportation, and two mentioned a lack of support from school and district leadership.

**Table 12. Percentage of research grantees reporting various challenges to implementing MBLT**

Challenge	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Varies by school	Not sure
Securing fiscal resources for MBLT	45%	27%	0%	9%	18%
Developing or maintaining district/school policies and services that support student needs	30%	40%	0%	0%	30%
Logistical challenges such as coordinating transportation	27%	36%	0%	9%	27%
Compensating teachers for additional time	18%	27%	0%	27%	27%
Compensating other staff for additional time	18%	18%	0%	27%	36%
Maintaining community partnerships	18%	27%	9%	18%	27%
District/school leadership support of MBLT	18%	18%	9%	27%	27%
Hiring qualified teachers	9%	27%	0%	36%	27%
Hiring qualified staff	9%	36%	0%	27%	27%
Managing outside staff and volunteers	9%	9%	9%	18%	55%
Building public awareness and support	8%	42%	8%	8%	33%
Retaining teachers	0%	36%	9%	27%	27%
Teacher/staff fatigue	0%	45%	9%	9%	36%
Student fatigue	0%	36%	9%	18%	36%

**Table reads:** Of the research respondents who indicated that securing fiscal resources for implementing MBLT was applicable to the schools they studied, 45% reported that this activity was very challenging.

### Challenges in sustaining MBLT activities

Many of the challenges during implementation of MBLT continued to hinder grantees' efforts to sustain MBLT. Among *on-the-ground grantees*, 71% said that securing fiscal resources was very challenging in their efforts to sustain MBLT activities after Ford Foundation funding ended, and 29% said this was somewhat challenging. (See **table 13**.)

Sizable proportions of on-the-ground grantees cited other issues as challenges to sustaining MBLT. These include compensating teachers and/or other staff for additional time, sustaining district/school leadership support of MBLT, and dealing with logistical challenges like transportation.

**Table 13. Percentage of on-the-ground grantees reporting various challenges to sustaining MBLT**

Challenge	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Varies by school	Not sure
Securing fiscal resources for MBLT	71%	29%	0%	0%	0%
Compensating teachers for additional time	41%	35%	18%	0%	6%
Compensating other staff for additional time	41%	35%	24%	0%	0%
District/school leadership support of MBLT	29%	65%	6%	0%	0%
Logistical challenges such as coordinating transportation	29%	65%	6%	0%	0%
Hiring qualified teachers	24%	47%	12%	18%	0%
Hiring qualified staff	24%	47%	18%	12%	0%
Managing outside staff and volunteers	24%	41%	18%	18%	0%
Building public awareness and support	24%	47%	24%	0%	6%
Student fatigue	19%	31%	31%	13%	6%
Teacher/staff fatigue	18%	53%	24%	0%	6%
Retaining teachers	12%	65%	6%	12%	6%
Maintaining community partnerships	12%	65%	12%	12%	0%
Developing or maintaining district/school policies and services that support student needs	12%	71%	18%	0%	0%

**Table reads:** Of the on-the-ground respondents who indicated that securing fiscal resources for sustaining MBLT was applicable to the schools in which they worked, 71% reported that this activity was very challenging.

The schools or other entities studied by *research grantees* faced many of the same challenges as on-the-ground grantees in their efforts to sustain MBLT activities after Ford Foundation grants ended. (See **table 14.**) Securing fiscal resources to sustain MBLT was considered to be very challenging by 75% of researchers. A majority of research grantees reported that logistical issues were very (38%) or somewhat (13%) challenging in sustaining MBLT. Half of the research grantees said that compensating teachers for additional time was very (25%) or somewhat (25%) challenging for the schools/entities they worked with. Other sustainability challenges cited by research grantees are listed in table 14.

**Table 14. Percentage of research grantees reporting various challenges to sustaining MBLT**

Challenge	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Varies by school	Not sure
Securing fiscal resources for MBLT	75%	0%	0%	0%	25%
Logistical challenges such as coordinating transportation	38%	13%	0%	25%	25%
Compensating teachers for additional time	25%	25%	0%	25%	25%
Hiring qualified teachers	13%	25%	0%	38%	25%
Compensating other staff for additional time	13%	38%	13%	13%	25%
Managing outside staff and volunteers	13%	13%	0%	25%	50%
Maintaining community partnerships	13%	13%	13%	25%	38%
Developing or maintaining district/school policies and services that support student needs	13%	50%	0%	13%	25%
District/school leadership support of MBLT	11%	33%	22%	11%	22%
Hiring qualified staff	0%	50%	13%	13%	25%
Retaining teachers	0%	38%	13%	25%	25%
Teacher/staff fatigue	0%	38%	13%	25%	25%
Student fatigue	0%	38%	13%	13%	38%
Building public awareness and support	0%	44%	11%	0%	44%

**Table reads:** Of the research respondents who indicated that securing fiscal resources for sustaining MBLT was applicable to the schools they studied, 75% reported that this activity was very challenging.

### Challenges in promoting and educating stakeholders about MBLT

An open-ended question asked advocacy grantees to identify their greatest challenges, if any, in promoting and educating stakeholders about MBLT. Many advocates cited challenges related to insufficient funding or capacity and sustainability. Several mentioned difficulties in ensuring the quality of expanded learning time, integrating MBLT with broader school reforms, or bringing about real change.

Another set of challenges for advocates involved ineffective communication or collaboration; mistrust or misunderstandings among key stakeholders; and resistance from teachers or school leaders. Finally, some advocates spoke of political, legislative, and bureaucratic challenges. The following quotes illustrate some of these points:

*We’ve also had a serious challenge around cost; although we have found some efficiencies in our model and succeeded in reducing our cost per child somewhat, high-quality ELT is a labor-intensive approach. Most of the schools and districts that need it simply cannot afford it ...*

*[W]hile there are strategies that get “more” and strategies that get “better” the most difficult thing to do is get “more and better” at the same time. That*

*requires a coordinated effort to improve the quality of learning happening in the extended day, regardless of who is managing the time. Our biggest challenge has been finding audiences that are ready to work on both by focusing on improving practices that directly increase student engagement in learning.*

*[T]he biggest obstacle has been leaders (principals or district leaders) who did not trust the teacher to make positive changes for students.*

*Teachers are somewhat reluctant to amend their own schedules and routines.*

*[Our challenges include] getting policy makers to focus on MBLT as a critical reform strategy; distilling the complexities of the issue down into easily digestible formats; and helping policy makers embrace different mental models about the use of time.*

## **Challenges in Denver, Los Angeles, and Rochester**

Case studies provided a more in-depth look at how some of the same challenges raised by survey respondents played out in schools and districts. The case studies also showed how some schools and districts have addressed these challenges.

### **Funding**

Securing funding for MBLT was a challenge in the three case study districts. In Los Angeles, funds are available to help districts and schools start reform initiatives, such as MBLT, but those funds are only provided for a limited period rather than to sustain programs over the long haul. However, some interviewees noted that if communities, schools, parents, and students are supportive of an MBLT initiative, it is much easier to sustain it even in the face of limited funding.

Schools participating in Denver's expanded learning opportunity pilot program faced a similar situation with limited district funds. However, these schools were required to have a plan for sustaining their activities once the district's pilot funding ran out. These sustainability plans may help counteract declining district support. Samantha Olson of the Colorado Education Initiative explained how her organization helped schools develop plans that did not require large amounts of extra funding:

*A part of Colorado's model ... was to really try to focus on no- or low-cost options, which was to not be naïve to the fact that an expanded day costs more, but to get leaders in buildings and districts to think more strategically about the tradeoffs and priorities related to their school and district vision. When we would say no- or low-cost, it's not that there was literally no- or low-cost, but it was, how did they think differently about resource allocation.*

All of the interviewees in Rochester expressed a belief that MBLT in their district is here to stay, although some voiced concerns about the impact of shrinking district funds for MBLT and the inevitable competition for resources among various reform strategies. Principal Caterina Leone-Mannino of Enrico Fermi School 17 linked MBLT's sustainability in Rochester to federal policy: "I don't think [MBLT] is going to go away because the federal [Every Student Succeeds Act] focuses on the priority of 300 hours." Former superintendent Bolgen Vargas was a bit more guarded, noting that the future of MBLT in Rochester will be secure so long as New York State continues to require schools and districts with federal School Improvement Grants to expand the learning day by a minimum of 200 hours.

## Logistical challenges

Echoing the grantee survey, the case study districts reported logistical challenges with implementing MBLT. In Rochester, expanding the school day had a notable impact on the district's ability to provide meals for students. The longer school day meant that schools were providing students with dinner as well as breakfast and lunch. However, because dinner was now part of the school day and not an after-school meal, the district could not get support for dinner through the National School Lunch Program. The district overcame this obstacle by working out an agreement with the New York State Department of Health to arrange for Child and Adult Care Food Program funding to support dinner for the students.

In Denver, access to after-school transportation was an issue for some families in extended day schools. (See **box C**.) As Ben Kirshner of the University of Colorado at Boulder explained, low-income families were particularly affected because "at some of these schools, they might have extended opportunities after school, but if there's not a school bus that will stay for the extended time, the kids can't take advantage of them." To address this challenge, Denver instituted a shuttle system, the Success Express, to support expanded learning in the north-east sections of the city.

In Rochester, MBLT created problems for students participating in interscholastic sports because the dismissal times of the few MBLT schools were not aligned with those of other schools in the district and surrounding region. When student athletes needed to leave early for a competition, they missed part of the school day. This challenge was addressed by adjusting the start time of the school day from 8:45 to 8:00 a.m. and the end time from 5:00 to 4:00 p.m. to better align the dismissal time with non-MBLT schools.

### Box C. Navigating MBLT within District Bureaucracies

Transportation complexities in Denver are not due to the unwillingness of the district office but are the inevitable result of trying to organize a suitable schedule for over 85,000 students, said Wendy Piersee, CEO of the Generation Schools Network. All key stakeholders in Denver, from policy makers to teachers and parents, are in favor of giving students more learning opportunities through innovative practices, she explained, but the responsibility for orchestrating some of the initiatives falls on midlevel district employees. Piersee uses transportation as an example of the inevitable bureaucracy found in large school districts:

*At the superintendent and school board level, they look at an Innovation plan and think, "Wow. If we can do this for kids, this is awesome." But then it gets down to the next level, that middle level of people who are trying to make the buses run, and trying to make the sports schedules work, and trying to organize teacher PD [professional development], and trying to get technology for the district, and all these things Innovation schools have an option to do on their own or do differently. So what it does, honestly, for that person at the middle level is it creates a huge challenge for them because they had the bus schedule figured out. That's where it breaks down when options like the Success Express aren't easily implemented.*

## *Working with outside providers*

Successful implementation and adoption of MBLT in Rochester hinged on the ability of district teachers to collaborate with outside community partners, who traditionally provided only after-school programming. Initially, these two groups were at odds with each other. “They didn’t agree on what enrichment meant, and there was just some real culture shock and culture clash between those who normally deliver positive youth development and those who are responsible in a really high-stakes environment for delivering academic outcomes,” said Mairéad Hartmann of the Rochester Area Community Foundation. The relationship between teachers and outside providers has changed in recent years, and the district is now actively engaging with community partners. For example, the district now provides professional development and training opportunities jointly to both school-based staff and outside providers.

## *Parent and teacher resistance to MBLT*

Rochester parents were generally supportive of MBLT, but a few families complained about receiving a revised or modified schedule for their children without sufficient notice. Families needed more time to adjust their own schedules. In Denver, some parents with children attending both MBLT and non-MBLT schools resisted expanded learning time because it complicated family logistics. As Todd Ely explained, “The district has a districtwide service day, the kids are off, but the expanded time schools don’t have it off. Then the parent is stuck with, ‘Do I just keep both of them home, since I have to arrange care for one of them?’”

In Denver, resistance to MBLT came from some of the more affluent parents who had already paid or could pay for after-school activities for their children. Under an expanded-day schedule, children would gain time in school but lose out on the after-school programs paid for by parents. This created an “equity conflict” between parents, based on socioeconomic status.

In Rochester, teachers were generally reluctant to buy into any new district policies, such as MBLT, because the district had a history of either turning its attention to other policies or forcing teachers to respond to district mandates without providing sufficient resources. To help mitigate resistance, the district made teacher participation in MBLT voluntary and guaranteed that any teacher taking part would be compensated accordingly. In Denver, some teachers were resistant to MBLT because they wanted to be compensated for working longer hours. And some were concerned about being held accountable for students’ mastery of content while a portion of their students’ instruction would come from a community partner during expanded hours.

## *Resistance to change*

In Los Angeles, interviewees mentioned the difficulty of making changes in a large school district where the bureaucratic tendency was to revert to the status quo. At the school level, where adherence to the status quo was less of a factor, bringing about change was less about bureaucracy and more about understanding the connections among Linked Learning, community schools, or Promise Neighborhoods and the ongoing work of the school’s principals, teachers, and students.

In Rochester, teachers, parents, and the community were initially skeptical of MBLT, in part because policies and programs were constantly changing in an effort to improve student achievement. “Reform fatigue” had created an environment where teachers and other stakeholders lacked trust in the district. Principal Leone-Mannino asserted that people were resistant to MBLT because it endangered the status quo; this makes “people themselves feel threatened and so they begin to become resistant,” she said.

### *Challenges related to policy churn*

Advocates face challenges in annually “selling” MBLT not only to new families and teachers, but also to new school board members and school administrators. If these key stakeholders were not part of the planning process for MBLT, they may not understand its benefits and may not be supportive. In Denver, a change in one district-level leader changed the focus for West Generation Academy. Despite initial signs of a successful MBLT program, the change in district-level priorities meant that the Generation Schools Network would not renew its contract with the Denver Public Schools.

### *District support*

Internal shifting of responsibilities across district offices and managers may have contributed to the views voiced by some interviewees that DPS was not fully invested in MBLT. A few interviewees noted that the district seemed more focused on other policies, such as charter schools or Innovation schools, that could be used to implement MBLT but did not have MBLT as the main priority. The limited district role was seen as problematic for strong, sustainable MBLT initiatives that create systemic change. As Samantha Olson of the Colorado Education Initiative put it, “A barrier to sustainability or to implementation, if we’re thinking from a systems and sustainability point of view, is that this type of work can’t just be a school-by-school based initiative.”



# Lessons Learned

Schools, districts, and organizations with an interest in MBLT have much to learn from the experiences of other groups that have implemented more and better learning time strategies. Many Ford Foundation grantees planned and refined their MBLT activities by visiting other districts and working with advocates, foundations, university faculty, and others with expertise in this area. This legacy report represents yet another opportunity to share the knowledge gained by the Ford grantees.

The report reveals the complexities involved in planning, implementing, and sustaining MBLT. While this information is most pertinent to groups that are engaged in or considering MBLT activities, the lessons learned are relevant to many school improvement efforts. Issues related to leadership, planning, funding, and stakeholder support are common to any endeavor that seeks to improve outcomes for students. We hope the experiences and reflections shared by the Ford Foundation grantees we surveyed or interviewed resonate with any individual or group trying to promote equity for all students.

In general, this study highlighted certain conditions that facilitate successful MBLT efforts. While every program may not have all of these conditions, steady progress and ongoing support is more likely if most of these conditions are in place.

**Case study work, along with comments from survey respondents, revealed how much supportive policies and programs matter at all levels of government and in every stage of the MBLT process.** Because MBLT requires schools and districts to challenge traditional structures and entities, state and local policies need to be both flexible and supportive. For example, policies and grants for expanded learning time can spur schools to consider MBLT as a reform strategy and can help jumpstart an initiative. Programs that support before- and after-school learning and enrichment can encourage school leaders to forge relationships with crucial community partners and help close equity gaps. Policies like community schools and 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants can also encourage schools to think about MBLT as part of a broader effort to serve families and the community. The Ford Foundation grantees displayed both fortitude and creativity in their efforts to retool state and local policies to better support MBLT.

The report's findings also suggest a need for district, state, and federal policy makers to consider MBLT when they develop policies to improve low-performing schools. Programs that provide dedicated funding for MBLT or specifically mention it as an allowable strategy in other initiatives are particularly helpful. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) presents states with an opportunity to use MBLT as a strategy to improve low-performing schools as long as they meet the statute's requirements. Conversely, some policies — such as high-stakes



accountability based on students' math and ELA test scores — can inadvertently hinder MBLT, so policy makers need to be aware of existing policy barriers.

**Our research also underscores the importance of the planning stage for MBLT.** Time spent up front on planning the details of MBLT and building a committed network of stakeholders is a key element for success. Examples include planning the logistics such as transportation, providing professional development to staff and others involved in the effort, dedicating staff to coordinating the work of schools and community partners, and working out the short- and long-term funding for the initiative.

**The case studies, in particular, show what a difference strong leadership can make at the district and school levels.** Superintendents and principals can champion MBLT as a critical part of other existing local reform initiatives. These leaders can also use their leverage to change aspects of the status quo that prevent schools from effectively implementing MBLT. Leadership for MBLT can come from other sources, too, such as teacher union leaders who find ways to extend learning time that acknowledge teachers' needs, advocacy group leaders who are devoted to equity and can influence local policy makers and leaders, or community organization leaders who can rally parents and citizens to have a collective voice in local policies.

**Support from key stakeholders, including community groups, teachers, parents, students, and others, is also essential to the success of MBLT efforts.** Despite initial concerns about how MBLT activities might disrupt family schedules or conflict with teacher schedules and compensation policies, the Ford Foundation grantees illustrate that these concerns can be addressed. The involvement of advocacy groups and the media was also helpful in educating and building support among families and community members. It is important to remember, however, that the parents and students served, as well as the teaching staff and other key constituencies, may change over time, so there is a need to constantly “sell” MBLT to new groups entering the school system.

**MBLT can be an effective strategy to help close the educational equity gaps found in many communities.** Many schools and districts are providing more equitable learning and enrichment opportunities for low-income students by implementing MBLT activities. For example, providing extracurricular activities or career exploration as part of MBLT can provide access for students from low-income families who may not otherwise have these experiences.

**Sustaining funding for MBLT was an almost universal challenge experienced by the Ford Foundation grantees.** Even when other conditions for success are present, it is necessary to have a steady, longer-term source of funding to move MBLT past the “reform” stage and make it an every-day, every-year part of the school system. While short-term grants can help to initiate a program and see it through the challenging early years, leaders have struggled to secure long-term funds. This was true even when sustainability efforts were designed into the MBLT initiative from the earliest stages. This speaks to the need for districts and states to provide a dedicated funding stream to cover the extra costs associated with expanding learning time.

**Implementing MBLT also brings additional challenges.** Examples include compensating teachers and school staff for the extra time required for MBLT, coordinating transportation and other logistics, and hiring qualified teachers and staff. While rules governing teacher schedules and compensation can be an impediment to MBLT, many schools, districts, and other partners were able to figure out ways to address teacher concerns and support MBLT in their schools. A collaborative mindset that allows for flexibility and creativity is important to overcome challenges.

**The Ford Foundation grantees indicated that MBLT positively contributed to several outcomes related to student performance, teaching and learning, school culture, and family engagement.** While these are promising, we need more reliable data to assess the impact of MBLT. This type of outcome research is challenging for several reasons, including the difficulty of sorting out the impact of more learning time from other concurrent reforms, such as more adult staff to help students, more training opportunities, and greater attention to non-academic services and supports.

**Perhaps the most important lesson we can glean from the many schools, districts and organizations that participated in this study is that successful MBLT approaches can spread systematically from school to school, district to district, and state to state.** As the report shows, many of the grantees featured in this report were inspired to implement MBLT activities in their schools and communities because of what they saw working in other places. It is our hope that educators, community leaders, and policy makers who see MBLT as a powerful tool for creating more equitable learning opportunities for low-income students can look to the many examples featured in this report for both guidance and inspiration. In closing, CEP would like to acknowledge and thank the many Ford Foundation grantees that participated in the survey or spoke with us for this report. As their stories show, sustaining high-quality MBLT activities is not easy work. We are grateful for the time they gave us and their willingness to share their experiences and knowledge. In this way, the grantees are catalyzing change well beyond the duration of their Ford Foundation funding.

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