

How Citizen Schools Support Teachers for Expanded Learning Time

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At Citizen Schools, a second shift of educators makes teachers more effective and happier, while also improving the outcomes of its students.

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Of all the questions I get about Citizen Schools, perhaps the most frequent is: “Do the teachers like you?” Many questioners seem conditioned to expect the worst of public school teachers and assume that a second shift of educators, offering different approaches and taking less or no pay, will inspire resentment from the full-time teachers who lead classes for a majority of the day.

Generally, however, America’s teachers have embraced Citizen Schools and embraced an expanded learning day and citizen power in their schools. While a few teachers may react defensively and hide behind the closed door of their classroom, the best teachers welcome any help they can get. Teacher unions such as the American Federation of Teachers (Weingarten 2011) and the Boston Teacher’s Union (2011) have also generally embraced Citizen Schools.

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THE SECOND SHIFT

Adding a second shift of educators in schools could fundamentally change the teacher’s job for the better, making it more sustainable and enjoyable while bringing more resources to kids and engaging families more deeply in their child’s education. Suburban teachers often get this support from active families and well-organized extended-day programs. But most teachers in high-poverty schools feel overworked, undersupported, and unsuccessful. As a result, many of them leave teaching too soon, creating a higher-than-necessary teacher churn and more challenges for students (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff 2013).

At the Isaac Newton School in East Harlem, New York, sixth-grade teacher David McKinney can teach his math class every morning knowing that every student in his class has done their homework from the previous day, because every student participates in the extended day with Citizen Schools and gets an hour of supported homework time from a second-shift teacher while still at school. Imagine this difference alone: Before Expanded Learning Time (ELT) maybe half of your students completed their homework, since many had no structured time and place to complete it. Now all of your students, or almost all of them, complete it. Imagine how that changes your job as a teacher.

Increasingly, Citizen Schools ELT schools include a thirty- to sixty-minute block where first-shift and second-shift teachers lead a class together. At Elmhurst Community Prep in Oakland, which in 2012-2013 had the most student learning growth of any middle school in the city, the teachers and teaching fellows co-teach an advisory block focused on goal-setting and on increasing students’ ownership for their own success. Most days each adult in the room takes an advisory group of ten to twelve students, allowing students and adults alike to build meaningful relationships and trust, a sort of school-based social capital that often helps students advance. When students get better at asking for help, at speaking up when they don’t understand something, and at holding give-and-take conversations with adults and peers, they are better positioned to move forward academically, socially, and professionally.

Allowing teachers time for pull-out tutoring, giving students extra academic practice time, and engaging parents in their child’s learning are all important ways that Citizen Schools supports teachers. But the most important way we support teachers is by motivating students to try harder in school. By exposing students to exciting real-world projects, Citizen Schools helps make traditional school subjects become more relevant and enticing. All of a sudden a topic sentence becomes a key skill to win a mock trial, not just another academic standard on a long list that needs to be mastered. A student becomes motivated to learn the Pythagorean theorem because it helps unlock the secret of programming a video game.

Citizen Schools also supports teachers by allowing them to be mentors and master educators. With a second shift of eager young educators on the scene, experienced full-time teachers can not only *get* help in the classroom, but can give help by mentoring the young teaching fellows sourced by Citizen Schools.

We had a teacher who taught English and who was really skilled at ELL (English language learner) instruction techniques. She was often in the classroom when we were teaching, and she ended up working with our Academic Program Lead to help her rewrite some of the lessons to better align with where she saw gaps in student learning and with how she taught in her class. We rearranged our staffing so that our three teaching fellows who worked most often with ELL students could observe her teaching. It was great, because it showed students that we were all colleagues and that the teachers and Citizen Schools staff were in it together. It was great for the teacher to see the planning that went into our programming and to have input into our instruction. And of course it was fabulous for our staff to have great techniques modeled by a pro.

— Kendra Engels, former Campus Director at the De Vargas Middle School in Santa Fe, New Mexico

ELT also provides teachers with a pathway to leadership, often a tough road in schools where the typical management structure for a school of 600 students is one principal, one assistant principal, a director of instruction or dean of discipline, a secretary, and fifty teachers. In the second and third years of ELT at her school in Redwood City, California, Sara Sheckel actually split her time between the school, where she taught two instead of four classes, and Citizen Schools, where she served as the part-time instructional

coach, providing feedback and professional development to the first- and second-year educators in the teaching fellowship. The experience allowed her to continue adding value as a teacher while building management skills, ultimately leading to Sheckel's appointment for the 2013-2014 year as assistant principal of the Roy Cloud K-8 school in another part of Redwood City.

TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

In many ways, the job of teacher as currently constructed is an outmoded relic of an industrial age. The teacher works mostly alone, putting equal attention into tasks he or she is great at and ones he or she struggles with. The job in year one is similar to the job in year ten or year forty. Just as students are treated too much like widgets in a factory, receiving the same dosage of multiplication tables and the same serving of Mendel's peas, regardless of their understanding and interest, teachers are asked to teach the same topics and in basically the same way regardless of their skill and experience and the needs of their students. It's as if students came into a hospital and received the same medicine and the same fifty-minute examinations from doctors and nurses who followed the same script regardless of the ailment and regardless of the particular specialty and previous training of the medical professionals.

The United States has roughly 5 million medical professionals but only 624,000 doctors who care for patients (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality 2010). At its best, the medical system leverages each of those 5 million professionals to do what they can uniquely do best, with the role of an intake nurse different from that of a nurse practitioner, and different still from the X-ray technician, the medical

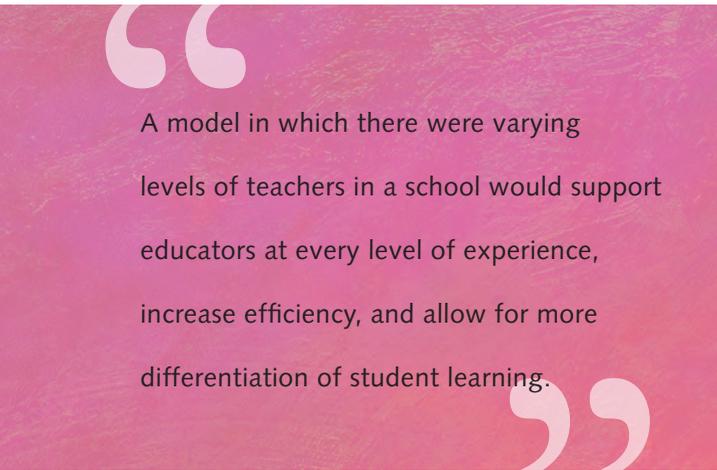
resident, and the attending physician. Surely education could learn something from this differentiated approach.

Right now there are approximately 3.5 million full-time teachers employed to teach about 50 million U.S. students enrolled in about 100,000 K-12 schools (Hess 2010). There are another 2.5 million public school employees, ranging from special education paraprofessionals, to lunch monitors, librarians, secretaries, principals, custodians, and administrators. Whereas in the 1950s the ratio was one teacher for every twenty-eight students, today, in part due to growing numbers

college graduates per year – and just 500,000 from competitive colleges – is an impossible task. A lot of people coming out of college don't want to be teachers, and yet we are trying to recruit almost one in five recent college graduates year after year. Imagine if we had slightly fewer teachers and paid them better and supported them with hundreds of thousands of teaching fellows, many of them training to become teachers but others taking a year or two to contribute to a local school before going on to careers in business or science or the arts. Most teaching fellows would be right out of college, but some might be older professionals transitioning to a new career in education.¹ This more flexible talent model would provide more continuity with better-supported master teachers staying longer, while also infusing schools with fresh energy and additional talented and caring adults.

A model in which there were varying levels of teachers in a school would support educators at every level of experience, increase efficiency, and allow for more differentiation of student learning. Master teachers who had demonstrated excellent teaching over a sustained period of time could earn 50 percent more than typical teachers today and could teach one or two fewer classes per semester so they had time to coach their younger peers. Core teachers might have a similar teaching load to teachers today but would receive help from a teaching fellow, offloading work such as grading of homework and tests, supervising student practice sessions, and management of field trips. This would allow core teachers to put more time into the development of great lesson plans.

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¹ For more information on these types of programs see: EnCorps (encorps teachers.com) and Encore Fellowships (encore.org/fellowships).



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of special-education students, it is one to fifteen, and in urban districts it's one teacher for every twelve students (Scafidi 2012).

The sheer volume of teachers creates real problems for professionalization of the craft, as Rick Hess of the American Enterprise Institute, among others, have described. Even with modest rates of turnover, schools across the nation need to hire 280,000 new teachers per year, many more than the 120,000 full-time registered nurses hired each year, or the 26,000 new lawyers (Rampell 2011). As Hess (2009) notes, hiring 280,000 excellent teachers every year when there are only 1.5 million

Teaching fellows and volunteer citizen teachers could support the master and core teachers while also extending the learning day, providing more time for academic practice, more time for personalized learning (through online programs such as Khan Academy or software-based learning), and significantly more time for students to make and do things with real professionals. Together, this American Dream team of talented educators could build academic and social skills while also helping students discover the real-world applications of school-based knowledge.

I was ready for a change and I was looking for leadership opportunities beyond the classroom. Also, I personally wasn't able to sustain the intensity at which I was working for that number of hours in a day. Since I was coming to Orchard Gardens at the start of the turnaround, the work was still intense and I was working just as hard that first year, but the difference was that the work with students ran until about 2:20 and then Citizen Schools took over and I could use that afternoon time to work with my colleagues. [Having a high-quality partner extend the day for students while teachers prepare the next day's lesson with colleagues] means that we have more time to create better outcomes for kids and it makes the profession of teaching more sustainable.

— Erin Dukeshire, middle school science teacher at the Orchard Gardens K–8 School in Boston

WHAT THIS APPROACH LOOKS LIKE

In some respects this multitiered approach would look like the Isaac Newton Expanded Learning Time Middle School in East Harlem, which is located in the same building where my mom taught freshman English more than forty years ago. After many years of disappointing performance, Principal Lisa Nelson adopted ELT in 2011-2012 for all of the school's sixth graders and saw proficiency jump by 26 percentage points in math and 17 percentage points in English. Nelson, a veteran administrator, also saw a new spirit in her school. Her teachers and her leadership team felt buoyed by the energy of the Citizen Schools second shift, and she increasingly turned to Citizen Schools campus director Seth Miran as a trusted partner. Her school was infused with artists and engineers and financial professionals. My mom even came back to her old school building and taught an apprenticeship in organic farming and said she learned a few new teaching tricks she wished she'd had decades earlier.

Isaac Newton is now in the process of expanding ELT to all students in sixth through eighth grades. As part of this year's plan, Principal Nelson has asked her Citizen Schools teaching fellows to take the lead on interim assessments, including the administration of "exit tickets," which are two- to three-question assessments to check for understanding at the end of a single lesson. Teaching fellows will score the various interim assessments, load the data onto a spreadsheet, and conduct initial analysis that they can then share with Citizen Schools and school-day colleagues. The core teachers will have more time to focus on instruction and lesson planning and other high-value activities.

LOOKING AHEAD

In many ways American education overall is headed in a positive direction. Despite the challenges our nation's schools face, average college graduation and high school graduation rates are going up, math scores are improving, and we now have hundreds – maybe even thousands – of schools delivering excellent results for low-income students. More outstanding college graduates are choosing to teach. We are moving toward a voluntarily adopted national Common Core curriculum that focuses more on higher-order thinking skills rather than regurgitation of memorized facts. And tests are about to become better, assessing writing and scientific thinking, not just the ability to guess correct answers on a fill-in-the-bubble test. The challenge for America is that while our schools are improving, schools around the world are improving faster. And the challenge for low-income American students is that while they are learning more – and their parents and their teachers are working harder – they are falling relatively further behind, left in the wake of a tsunami of privatized extra learning opportunities that benefit their upper-middle-class peers.

As I look today over a troubled public education landscape – a landscape where innovation and personalized learning is growing rapidly, but so is inequality – I yearn for the chance to rebuild our national sense of shared public purpose. Public schools were intended to knit together a new country, giving children of immigrants and of business owners the same chance at an excellent education. Today public schools and their teachers feel under siege. Some of that is deserved, a consequence of resistance to fair-minded change and higher standards. But surely much of the acrimony is undeserved, driven in part by the lack of connection and therefore lack of empathy between upper- and

lower-income parents, between business leaders and teachers, and between all of us as American citizens.

Gandhi said that we must *be* the change we want to see in the world. If we want better public schools, we can't wait for some new curriculum or management plan or market mechanism. We need to roll up our sleeves and make them better. We need to step into schools with minimal judgment and as much curiosity and energy as we can muster. That's how to change the opportunity equation.

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