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Expanded Learning Time

A Summary of Findings from
Case Studies in Four States

Credits and Acknowledgments

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Based in Washington, D.C. at the George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development and founded in January 1995 by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. We do not represent any special interests. Instead, we help citizens make sense of the conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create the conditions that will lead to better public schools.

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Many low-performing schools across the nation have increased learning time in response to federal requirements for the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. The conditions governing federal waivers of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) also require certain schools to redesign the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration. Furthermore, the waivers allow greater flexibility to redirect certain federal funding streams toward increased learning time.

This report by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) at the George Washington University summarizes the findings of a series of case studies of 17 low-performing schools within 11 school districts in four geographically dispersed states—Connecticut, Colorado, Oregon, and Virginia. This research examined state and local efforts to expand learning time through the unique lens of state and local responses to specific federal provisions. In particular, we investigated the strategies being used by the case study sites to meet federal requirements and encouragements for increased or expanded learning time, and the challenges, successes, and impacts associated with this implementation process.

All four states in this study have been granted ESEA waivers.¹ Most of the case study schools received SIG funds and/or were identified as “priority” schools under ESEA waivers, meaning that they were among the lowest-performing schools in their state. From October 2013 through March 2014, CEP staff and consultants visited all of the participating districts and the majority of participating schools. We interviewed 49 education leaders, including 13 state education officials, 18 district leaders, and 18 school principals. We also gathered information from state ESEA waiver applications and other relevant state, district, and school policy documents.

As explained later in this report, different federal initiatives use different terminology and definitions for provisions that have the common goal of adding time for student learning and for teacher collaboration, professional development, or planning. For simplicity’s sake, this report uses the umbrella term of “expanded learning time,” or ELT, to describe these various approaches.

Throughout this report, the findings are supported by examples from specific districts and schools. More detailed information can be found in the individual reports developed by CEP for each of the four states and 11 districts. These detailed reports, plus three appendices, are available on the CEP website (www.cep-dc.org).

¹ Connecticut, Colorado, and Virginia all received extensions of their waivers in July 2014 and Oregon received an extension in October 2014.

Summary of Key Findings

- **Case study schools are meeting the federal requirements to expand learning time, but ELT is costly, and the short-term nature of federal grants is causing difficulties for some schools.** Districts and schools face a major challenge, cited by nearly all case study interviewees, in sustaining ELT after federal grants end. In addition, they sometimes have difficulty meshing federally funded ELT initiatives with existing local reforms.
- **Case study districts and schools differ in when and how they expand learning time.** To add instructional time for students, some schools and districts are extending the start or end time of the regular school day or reducing non-instructional time within the day, while others are adding days to the school year. Some schools are adding learning opportunities before or after school or during the summer. Schools are also using the expanded time in different ways. For example, some are increasing time for teacher collaboration and professional development as well as for student instruction. Many schools are using additional time for student enrichment as well as academic activities, and some employ third-party providers to deliver these services.
- **State, district, and school leaders participating in these case studies often emphasized that improving the quality of instruction in low-performing schools was just as important as increasing the quantity of instructional time.** Setting aside more time for teachers to collaborate on instructional planning and improve their knowledge and skills through professional development was often seen as a way to improve instructional quality. Indeed, some district and school leaders believed expanding time for these types of teacher activities was more effective than increasing instructional time for students.
- **There was evidence of improved student outcomes in some, but not all, of the case study schools; however, several schools were in the early stages of ELT implementation at the time of the study.** In some schools, student test scores or graduation rates improved, while other schools reported improvements in student performance on classroom and interim assessments. Interviewees were careful to note, however, that improvement cannot be attributed solely to ELT because of the many simultaneous reforms being undertaken in their schools.
- **Few case study districts and schools were taking advantage of the flexibility afforded by waivers to redirect certain federal funding streams to ELT.** Very few of the districts studied were supporting ELT with the 20% “set-aside” of funds previously reserved for public school choice and supplemental tutoring services under the Title I program for disadvantaged children. And only a few districts and schools with access to 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants were using those funds to expand learning time for all students *during* the regular school day, as permitted by waivers. Local leaders often noted that this option would cost more than the traditional use of 21st CCLC grants, to provide learning opportunities for targeted students outside of the regular school day.
- **States and districts varied in their level of involvement and support for ELT initiatives in schools.** Case study schools with “innovation” or charter status in Colorado and case study schools in Connecticut reported fewer challenges implementing ELT programs than other schools in the study. This may be partly due to policies and programs particular to these two states that help facilitate ELT.

- **Implementing ELT sometimes required negotiations with teachers' unions about such issues as contractual time and compensation.** Several case study schools staggered teacher schedules and partnered with outside organizations to work with students to increase instructional time without changing teachers' total contract time. Some case study districts reported positive relationships with teachers' unions that enabled them to incorporate ELT and compensation for this time into new teacher contracts. In other districts, negotiations with unions and resistance from teachers presented a challenge to implementing ELT.
- **Teacher and student fatigue from longer school days was cited as a challenge in implementing ELT in all four states studied.** Leaders in several schools reported that staff had some difficulties maintaining their own stamina and keeping their students focused during longer instructional blocks or longer days. One school got rid of the longer blocks for this reason and focused its ELT on teacher collaboration. Some schools have balanced academic activities with enrichment activities to try to keep students interested or have brought in community partners to work with students.

About the CEP Study

A seminal 1994 report entitled *Prisoners of Time* by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning called attention to the rigid policies across the country that restricted the length of the school day and year and the use of time within that day. The Commission recommended altering the use of school time in “new, different, and better ways” to allow more time for student learning. In the 20 years since, schools, districts, and states have increasingly turned to ELT as a way to restructure and improve instruction and learning.

Research findings over the past two decades about the impact of ELT on student achievement in low-performing schools have been mixed. Recent studies have examined strategies for making the best use of both existing and newly added instructional time. For example, Farbman (2012) found that effective uses of ELT include fostering teacher collaboration, developing students' abilities in non-tested subjects, and increasing tutoring opportunities in academic subjects. Studies by the National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL) also highlight the importance of allotting specific time within an ELT approach for teacher professional development, collaboration, and feedback (2014a; 2014b).

The CEP case studies build on prior research by examining the efforts of states, districts, and schools to implement strategies that directly promote ELT in low-performing schools in response to federal funding and requirements. The main federal initiatives that call for additional learning time are the SIG program and ESEA waivers. In addition, ESEA waivers give states, districts, and schools greater flexibility to redirect funds from two other federal programs—21st CCLC grants and certain set-aside monies under Title I—toward approaches that increase learning time.

Thus, states, districts, and schools that use federal funds to incorporate and support ELT must navigate a complex set of federal provisions, which vary across programs in their terminology, definitions, and specific requirements. The relevant provisions from federal guidance and regulations are briefly summarized below in Box A and described in more detail in Appendix A (available at www.cep-dc.org).

This focus on federal policies shaped the design of the CEP case studies and the selection of participating states, districts, and schools. Furthermore, this study is intended to help policymakers better understand the complex interactions among federal, state, district, and school policies to promote student achievement by expanding learning time.

This report summarizes findings from the CEP study that cut across states, districts, and schools. It includes the following sections, drawn from the research questions for this study:

- The range of approaches used by districts and schools to expand learning time
- State and local uses of the flexibilities afforded by ESEA waivers to support ELT
- State policies and their impact on ELT
- District-level support for ELT
- Challenges of funding and implementing ELT in case study districts and schools
- Impact of ELT on students, teachers, schools, and communities
- Policy implications of the case study findings

Box A. Federal Definitions and Policies for ELT

School Improvement Grants

The SIG program, funded at \$505 million in FY 2015, supports reforms aimed at raising student achievement in a state's lowest-performing schools. Districts that receive SIGs must use these funds to implement one of four reform models in low-performing schools. Two of these models—turnaround and transformation—explicitly require schools to “establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time,” among other actions (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a, pp. 27, 39).

Current SIG guidance defines “increased learning time” as “increasing the length of the school day, week, or year to significantly increase the total number of school hours” in order to add time for instruction in core academic subjects and other subjects; enrichment activities; and teacher collaboration, planning, and professional development (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a, p. 23).

Proposed revisions to the SIG requirements published by the U.S. Department of Education in September 2014 would add three new reform models that schools may adopt with SIG funds, including a “state-determined model” that has been approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2014, p. 53267). This state-determined model would still have to be aligned with the turnaround principles under the state's ESEA waiver and include “increased learning time” as defined in SIG guidance (p. 53270).

ESEA Waivers and Priority Schools

States with waivers must identify a list of “priority” schools that include the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state according to various criteria. In each priority school, districts must implement a series of interventions that align with seven federally defined “turnaround principles”; the third such principle calls for “redesigning the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b, p. 7).

An addendum to the waiver guidance points out that this redesign “does not necessarily require adding time to increase the total number of school hours” and notes that a school district “might, for example, move to block scheduling to reduce transition time between classes and thus increase instructional time . . .” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. 9). Thus, the waiver requirements for ELT in priority schools differ somewhat from the SIG provisions, which require SIG grantees to *lengthen* the school day, week, or year to significantly increase the total number of school hours.

States with waivers must also identify a set of “focus” schools—Title I schools with large gaps between student subgroups in achievement or graduation rates—but these schools do not have to implement particular interventions. Both priority and focus schools must receive assistance from their school district for activities to improve student achievement.

ESEA Waivers and 21st CCLC funds

Federal 21st CCLC grants, funded at \$1.1 billion in FY 2015, have traditionally been used to provide academic enrichment opportunities to children during *non-school hours*, such as before and after school or on weekends. Under the ESEA waiver guidance, however, states may request flexibility from the Secretary of Education to use 21st CCLC grants to expand learning activities *during the regular school day*. All four states in the CEP case studies asked for this flexibility.

The waiver guidance related to 21st CCLC grants defines expanded learning time as “time that [a local educational agency] or school extends its normal school day, week, or year to provide additional instruction or educational programs for all students beyond the state-mandated requirements for the minimum number of hours in a school day, days in a school week, or days or weeks in a school year” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012c, p. 30). The guidance also describes several characteristics of “high-quality” ELT (p. 31).

ESEA Waivers and Title I Set-aside Funds

High-poverty schools that receive federal Title I, ESEA funds have long been required to “increase the amount and quality of learning time” if they operate “schoolwide” programs aimed at improving academic achievement for the entire student population (section 1114(b)(1)(B)(ii)(II)). However, the ESEA waivers open up two potential new sources of additional support for increased learning time. Specifically, school districts may repurpose the 20% of Title I funds that were previously set aside for transporting students under the law’s public school choice option and/or providing supplemental tutoring services, and instead, at their option, use those set-aside funds for ELT and other allowable school improvement activities. This same flexibility extends to the 10% of Title I funds that districts would otherwise have to set aside for professional development.

Pseudonyms for Districts and Schools

To encourage frank responses, individuals interviewed at the district and school levels were promised that their own names, as well as the names of participating districts and schools, would remain anonymous. Therefore, pseudonyms are used throughout this report in place of the names of local individuals, schools, and districts. The table below lists the pseudonyms, based on watch and clock manufacturers, of the schools and districts studied in the four states.

States	Districts	Schools
Colorado	Casio	Frogman, Oceanus, and Pathfinder
	Seiko	Astron, Premier, and Sportura
Connecticut	Breitling	Grenchen
	Glycine	Bienne and Meylan
	Movado	Ebel
Oregon	Cartier	Santos
	Invicta	Corduba
	Poljot	Kirov
Virginia	Corum	Artisan and Romulus
	Minerva	Pythagoras
	Tutima	Patria

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A summary of the ELT initiatives being implemented in each school, the grade levels served by the school, and its SIG and/or priority school status, can be found in Appendix B. More detailed information about the study methods, including study design, participant selection, and data analysis processes, can be found in Appendix C. Both appendices, as well as detailed reports for each of the four states and 11 districts with the 17 case study schools, are available at www.cep-dc.org.

Approaches to ELT

Several findings about approaches to ELT emerged from CEP's research in participating states, districts, and schools.

First, case study districts and schools are using a variety of approaches to comply with federal requirements to expand instructional time. Even schools within the same district vary in their approaches as each site integrates ELT within its existing school culture. Most of these approaches have the underlying goals of increasing the focus on academic, remediation, and enrichment activities and enhancing opportunities for teacher collaboration and professional

development. Interviewees emphasized that both academic and enrichment activities are important components of ELT and a school's overall improvement plan. Oftentimes, the ELT approach implemented in schools depended on state and local policies, student needs, resources, and local capacity.

Adding time to the school day for all students. Leaders at the Kirov school in Oregon decided to expand the school day by 30 minutes and used SIG funds to pay their teachers for the extra time during the instructional day. Initially, students who were identified as performing below grade level were targeted for ELT, but this policy has since been extended to all students. Principal Romero explained:

Our focus has gone larger and [recognizes] that everybody would—no matter where they may be on that continuum of learning—benefit from extra support. And so our extended time is now [for] everyone . . . So some students are receiving interventions. Some students are receiving enrichments. But everybody's benefiting from the extra time.

Restructuring an alternative school's schedule. Corduba High School, also located in Oregon, restructured its entire school day after receiving a SIG grant. Before the grant, Corduba was an alternative school, and students attended part-time; after being awarded a SIG grant, students were required to attend a full day of classes that ran from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The expanded school day also allowed for before- and afterschool instructional opportunities, summer school, enrichment opportunities, and an internship program through a partnership with a local college. In addition, the school offered ELT opportunities during school vacation periods and some weekends throughout the year. For example, students worked with local environmental groups to maintain hiking trails, remove invasive species, and restore wetlands.

According to the school's principal, Mr. Thompson, Corduba High has tried to use expanded learning opportunities to improve the school's culture and increase student engagement. "We have different types of support for different students; we have something to really appeal to everybody," said Thompson. "I think we've created a culture where students are actively seeking out as many of those opportunities as possible."

Expanding the school day as a school and district policy. Using SIG funds, two schools—Bienne and Meylan—in the Glycine School District in Connecticut expanded the school day. Bienne added 45 minutes to the school day and hired full-time art and music teachers and a full-time librarian. The newly hired staff allowed students to take non-core subjects while teachers of core subjects (English, math, science, and social studies) collaborated for 60 minutes each day during a common planning time. Meylan added 30 minutes of ELT and changed from the more traditional two-semester school year to trimesters. Meylan's Principal Walser said that the combination of additional time and the trimester schedule allowed students to be "academically successful" by providing them with multiple opportunities to repeat courses within the same year and ultimately fulfill all the requirements to graduate from high school.

While these individual schools implemented their SIG initiatives, the Glycine district enacted a districtwide ELT program that added 30 minutes of instructional time to their teachers' contract in 2010. Although the two schools implemented ELT differently, the

districtwide initiative enabled the schools to keep many key aspects of their ELT initiatives after their federal SIG grants expired.

Staggering teachers' schedules in lieu of adding teacher contract time. The Grenchen School in Connecticut expanded the school day from roughly 6½ to 8½ hours by staggering teachers' schedules and working with community partners. This enabled the school to provide students in grades 3 through 6 with additional instructional time while allowing teachers to keep within their total contract hours. During the ELT hours, when the school has only some staff members in the building, community partners offer support classes for students in grades 3 and 4 during the morning and enrichment activities in the afternoon. The schedule for community partner engagement is reversed for grades 5 and 6.

Opening summer school to all students. The Corum School District in Virginia expanded its summer program with SIG funds. Originally, the summer program focused only on remediation for students performing below grade level, but with the extra federal funding, it was opened to all students. With funding from the federal Summer Food Service Program, the summer school students receive breakfast and lunch. And collaborations with local community members provide “that enrichment piece to expand on what [students have] already learned and also to maybe get them interested in things that they have not been exposed to during the regular school day,” said Principal Gibson of Corum's Artisan Elementary School. Also in Corum, one official at the Romulus High School said that the summer program, as well as other extracurricular programs for students, was used more by younger students in the elementary school but that as students got older their participation decreased—perhaps because of other obligations outside of school.

Expanding school year. Frogman Charter School in Colorado is neither a SIG school nor a priority school. It was included in this study because it draws many of its students from middle schools that are priority schools and illustrates the strategies, including ELT, that have been adopted by a larger network of charter schools in the Casio district. Students who enroll in Frogman and their parents are aware of the ELT initiatives, and teachers who opt to work there agree to work longer hours. At Frogman, the school day and school year are expanded beyond the minimum required by the state. The students attend school from 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and their school year starts a week before the traditional public schools in the Casio district. During the school day, students attend 55-minute classes, with a double block for English language arts. The schedule also includes a “Frogman Lab” block, during which students who need extra support receive targeted interventions and other students participate in enrichment activities.

Other examples of expanded school years from the CEP study include the Pathfinder school in Colorado, which extended the school year by two weeks for students and teachers, and the Corum School District in Virginia, which added seven days to its year.

Providing out-of-school ELT. Two schools in Oregon, Corduba and Kirov, used the summer to expand learning time for students. Corduba partnered with a local college to provide summer activities for students. The activities have become highly desirable and students compete to enroll in particular programs, said Principal Thompson. At Kirov, school leaders used SIG funds to provide students with extra help in reading or math during a three-week summer program that begins in August. School leaders opted to offer this program later in the summer to help students transition from their summer schedule to the school schedule.

Granting credit for out-of-school activities. One Colorado district in our study, Seiko, implemented a competency-based education (CBS) system, where students progress through levels (instead of grades) by demonstrating mastery rather than by putting in “seat time.” Because students’ progress is not tied to the amount of time they spend in a classroom or studying a single subject, some students may pass competency benchmarks and move to the next level by providing evidence of proficiency gained inside and *outside* of school. For example, a district official said students may learn skills aligned with the school’s curriculum through the Girl Scouts. CBS is an approach “where the learning [done] outside of the classroom actually does count in the classroom,” he said.

Second, districts and schools that implement ELT face decisions about whether to use expanded time for teacher professional development, for more classroom instruction and other student activities, or for both. State, district, and school leaders participating in these case studies often emphasized the importance of improving the quality, as well as increasing the quantity, of instruction in low-performing schools. Setting aside more time for teachers to collaborate on instructional planning and improve their knowledge and skills through professional development was often seen as a way to improve instructional quality.

While some schools attempt to integrate both professional development and additional instruction into their expanded schedules, the approach selected depends on a variety of factors at the state, district, and school levels. Many districts and schools are increasing time for teachers to improve instruction, in addition to or instead of expanding class time for students. All of the interviewees agreed that focusing at least some time on teacher collaboration and professional development is an important and necessary component of successful ELT.

While nearly all schools in the study used some of their time for teacher collaboration and professional development, two schools in the study made teacher collaboration the main focus of their expanded time, as explained below.

More time for teacher learning and collaboration. At Pathfinder School in Colorado, school leaders and staff were strategic and purposeful about their use of time. Much of Principal Akira’s focus was on providing time for teacher collaboration and professional development. “The most innovative way we leverage time is a little less around students and a little more around teachers. So our investment is very much into teacher learning, teacher professional development, teacher collaboration,” said Akira.

The table below shows how teachers spend this time at Pathfinder.

Day	Activity
Monday	Planning within teacher teams
Monday	Individual planning time
Tuesday	Data team meetings
Wednesday	Professional development focused on arts integration
Wednesday (every other)	Open meeting with Principal Akira
Thursday	Planning and vertical alignment with teacher teams
Thursday (after school)	Whole-group professional development
Friday	Teachers conduct classroom visits and provide peer feedback

Akira summed up the benefits of this teacher planning and collaboration time in this way:

I think that building out calendar time, like time in classrooms [with peer teacher feedback], helps invest in the teachers in a way that helps them become more effective, therefore utilizing that extra time in a way that's more thoughtful.

Extra teacher planning time. Ebel School in Connecticut reconfigured its schedule to give teachers 50-minute blocks of preparation time three days a week. The length of the teachers' day was also expanded so they start their school day at 8:00 a.m. instead of 9:00. Teachers were compensated for this time with a 10% pay increase. Principal Grinberg explained how teachers use this extra hour before school and how it has become integral to the school's overall improvement efforts:

[Teachers] plan together—they create their own professional development together. So they're teaching each other, which is really great. So there is a lot of collaboration. There is a lot of mentorship. There [are] a lot of people visiting each other's classrooms to see what's best for our students.

Since SIG implementation, instruction has become more rigorous in Ebel classrooms, according to Grinberg. He attributes much of this change to the extra time for common teacher planning and professional development. He also credits this improvement in instruction to teachers taking on leadership roles, teaching other teachers, and collaborating on professional development.

Time for teacher learning communities and student instruction. Santos High School in Oregon restructured its school day to allow for professional learning communities (PLCs) for teachers *and* additional instructional time for students. Before the change, Santos teachers had PLCs twice a week as a whole group for one hour on Wednesdays and Thursdays and the students were dismissed an hour early. Under the new schedule, half of the teachers engage in PLCs on Wednesdays while the other half work with students. On Thursdays the teachers switch places.

Finally, ELT is not a standalone initiative. While the state and local officials we interviewed generally had positive views about the effectiveness of ELT, most emphasized that it is only one aspect of a school's overall improvement plan. In all of the case study schools, it was paired with other initiatives aimed at increasing student achievement, such as improving teacher instruction or providing targeted interventions to struggling students.

Some district and school leaders considered the ELT requirement an opportunity to implement other improvement initiatives. For example, Ms. Anderson, a district official from Tutima School District in Virginia, said that Patria School in her district was able to have a more robust literacy program by keeping its 90-minute block of literacy instruction without sacrificing instructional time in other subjects or its enrichment and remediation blocks.

Uses of ESEA Waiver Flexibility to Support ELT

In general, case study districts are not redirecting Title I set-aside funds toward ELT, as allowed by ESEA waivers. Only a few case study districts chose to repurpose the 20% set-aside for school choice and supplemental educational services and use it for ELT. None of the case study districts used the 10% set-aside for teacher professional development to implement ELT.

Using Title I set-aside funds for high school ELT. The Cartier School District in Oregon is one case study district in which certain Title I schools identified for improvement have used their Title I set-aside for ELT. High schools in the district have used the set-aside funds to identify 8th grade students who are struggling with academics and bring them in a week early to high school to help them acclimate. Other Cartier schools have used the funds to give students who have fallen behind the opportunity to recover credits.

Supporting extended-day activities with Title I funds. Patria School in Virginia used some of the set-aside funding to pay for the state-required turnaround coach, salary and benefits expenses for teachers' extra time, and snacks the school provides to its students during the extended day.

Similarly, most case study schools have not seized on the flexibility to use 21st CCLC funding for ELT. All four states in this study had 21st CCLC grants and applied for and received the optional flexibility under ESEA waivers to use these funds for ELT during the regular school day. In the case study states, the use of 21st CCLC funds for ELT activities during the regular school day was not commonplace. Among the 17 case study schools in the study, two incorporated ELT into the regular school day using 21st CCLC funds, as described below. (Colorado amended its NCLB waiver application and requested the optional 21st CCLC flexibility, but at the time the interviews were conducted, schools had not yet been offered this option.)

Expanded school hours with 21st CCLC funds. Grenchen Elementary School in Connecticut uses the 21st CCLC funds to provide programs during the expanded school hours with community partners and to pay teachers in these programs for the extra hours worked beyond their contractually obligated time.

Classroom support during regular day with 21st CCLC. The Patria School in Virginia has a 21st CCLC grant through a community partner, which provides tutors in grades 5 through 8 during the regular school day as part of the school's ELT initiative. "[The community partner] works specifically with [these grades] . . . Their tutors are in the classroom for that last hour of the day, the extended part of the day, every single day, working directly with the classroom teacher," said the district administrator.

The other case study schools kept their 21st CCLC funds for activities before and after school or during the summer. Many interviewees said this was a better use of these resources because they could be targeted on certain students and on enrichment, tutoring, and non-academic activities. One district leader in Connecticut elaborated on the cost effectiveness of this approach:

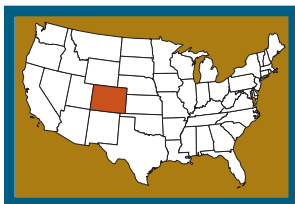
[T]he cost of extending our day with all of our certified staff greatly outreaches what it costs to put on the afterschool programs, which are generally staffed by noncertified folks. It's just more economical.

A state leader in Virginia agreed that funding was one reason why most 21st CCLC applicants in the state have not chosen to use the ELT flexibility option. Virginia’s 21st CCLC grant amount has not increased, so if applicants chose to shift the focus of their awards, schools would have to take funds away from their afterschool programs for targeted groups of students and dilute that money to serve the entire school. This comment was echoed by a school leader in Pythagoras who said that the 21st CCLC program has “so many things for students to take advantage of—enrichment opportunities that are hard to build in on just the regular school day.”

Similarly, the Poljot School District, in Oregon, uses its 21st CCLC grant to offer a wide range of afterschool academic and enrichment programs for students of all ages. These programs included extra homework time and tutoring, college fieldtrips for high school students, and enrichment activities for younger students.

State Policies and Their Impact on ELT

The four states in this study varied in their support for and implementation of ELT initiatives. Schools with additional flexibility through state policies, such as charter schools and schools with “innovation” status in Colorado, appear to have some advantages in offering more extensive ELT. In Connecticut, state school improvement programs have fostered ELT in traditionally low-performing schools. Oregon and Virginia also have policies and/or programs that support ELT, but not to the same degree as Colorado and Connecticut. Individual reports with more detailed information for each of the four states are available on the CEP website (www.cep-dc.org).



COLORADO

Colorado has not adopted a statewide definition of expanded learning time, and the state officials interviewed for this case study offered various perspectives on how ELT can be implemented. Perhaps because there is no statewide definition, districts and schools in Colorado are implementing ELT in different ways. The Colorado Department of Education assigns performance managers to work with SIG schools to make sure they are meeting the federal requirements, including expanding time for learning core content within the day and increasing opportunities for teachers to collaborate. ELT is offered to all students in these schools, although not all students participate.

Several state officials also emphasized that Colorado has a strong tradition of local control of education, which may be another reason for the varied approaches to implementing ELT. Due in part to this local nature of school governance, state officials did not think the federal flexibilities with the use of funds for ELT under the state’s ESEA waiver have accelerated efforts to expand learning time—at least not yet.

Colorado districts and schools that are interested in implementing ELT may also benefit from the additional flexibility available through the state’s Innovation Schools Act of 2008. Under this legislation, schools may apply to their local school board for waivers from district-level policies, and school boards may apply to the state for waivers from certain state laws and regulations affecting school districts. The intent is to “[find] a way for districts to develop and implement innova-

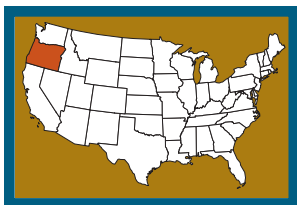
tive practices in a wide variety of areas for the purpose of improving student outcomes” (Colorado Department of Education, 2013, p. 2). This act gives designated schools greater flexibility in such areas as staffing, teacher contracts, scheduling, and budgeting, and “requires at least 60 percent of a school’s teachers to approve the innovation plans, which have typically included provisions like longer working hours or at-will employment contracts,” according to a report in ChalkBeat Colorado (Waltz, 2013). Interviewees for this study reported that this flexibility has made it easier for Innovation schools to adjust teachers’ schedules as part of an ELT initiative without confronting major contractual obstacles.



CONNECTICUT

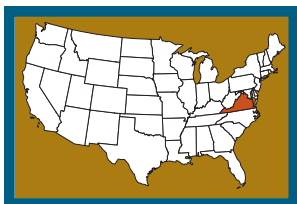
Of the four states in this study, Connecticut was the most active supporter of ELT. Connecticut has implemented statewide policies that directly support ELT as a school improvement strategy or that work in unison with the federal SIG and ESEA waiver requirement. These state programs include Alliance Districts, Priority School Districts, and the Commissioner’s Network (see the Connecticut case study at www.cep-dc.org for more information on these programs). There is considerable overlap between priority/turnaround schools and these other state programs, so the same school may have access to multiple sources of funding for ELT. For example, all of the state’s priority/turnaround schools are in an Alliance District, and 27 of the 28 priority/turnaround schools are also in a Priority School District. As of January 2014, 5 of the 11 Commissioner’s Network schools were also priority/turnaround schools.

The state divided 21st CCLC funds into two categories: funds for traditional activities before school, after school, or during the summer; and funds for ELT within the school day. Applicants seeking funding for traditional activities could receive up to \$200,000, whereas applicants looking for funding for ELT could receive up to \$150,000. In the most recent grant cycle, Connecticut awarded six traditional 21st CCLC grants and five ELT grants.



OREGON

Under Oregon’s waiver application, schools that are receiving SIG funds are also labeled priority schools. SIG schools that have opted to implement the transformation and turnaround models must expand learning time under the federal regulations and have federal funds to do so. Oregon does not provide additional funds to schools for ELT. However, the state does promote the use of two school-time appraisal tools developed by the National Center on Time and Learning and offers professional development on the use of these tools to staff in all SIG and priority schools.



VIRGINIA

Although Virginia does not fund ELT initiatives directly, school districts may use the portion of their state Standards of Quality (SOQ) funding that is dedicated for prevention, intervention, and remediation to expand learning time in schools. The SOQ funding is the state’s largest direct aid program to K-12 education and requires a local matching effort. In particular, the portion of SOQ funding that supports programs for at-risk students may be used for ELT.

One state official interviewed for this study said she has sought to direct SOQ funds to SIG and priority schools for ELT initiatives. Furthermore, in SIG schools, any intervention, remediation, and summer school services supported by SOQ funds must be open to all students—which is not the case in non-SIG schools, which can target these programs to students who need extra help.

Virginia, like Oregon, also recommends that schools use the National Center for Time and Learning’s time appraisal tools, and the state’s School Improvement team provides technical support on these tools.

District-Level Support for ELT

Like the states, districts varied in their support for and implementation of ELT initiatives. Some districts have not invested additional local resources in ELT, beyond the available federal and state funding, while others have provided local funding or helped schools collaborate with community partners to expand learning time. Individual reports with more detailed information for each of the 11 districts are available on the CEP website (www.cep-dc.org).

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Casio District, Colorado. The Casio School District has its own metric for identifying schools in need of improvement; once these schools are identified, the district groups them into two networks based on geographic location. One of the two networks of schools collaborated with the National Center for Time and Learning’s TIME Collaborative to design ELT strategies for network schools and find funding from foundations that promote ELT.

Seiko District, Colorado. The Seiko School District has a districtwide competency-based education system in which students are promoted from grade to grade by demonstrating mastery in a subject, not by accumulating seat time. In their implementation of ELT in SIG schools, district and school leaders have emphasized professional development and teacher collaboration rather than expanding the school day for students. By using SIG funds for these purposes, the district hopes to expose students to better teaching practices and develop skills that teachers will retain after the SIG funds have expired.

Breitling District, Connecticut. Breitling School District officials are very supportive of ELT. The district works with schools and the National Center for Time and Learning’s TIME Collaborative to identify state funds that could be re-allocated, when permissible, to support ELT, and to find local and other sources of funding for ELT. District officials also help coordinate programs with community partners who work in Grenchen and other district schools. The district’s human resources department has also been helpful in providing information about teacher contracts, particularly to schools that need to make changes as a result of ELT.

Glycine District, Connecticut. The Glycine district added time to the regular school day for all its schools, and district officials worked with the union to compensate staff through a new teacher contract. More detail about this process is presented in another section of the report.

Movado District, Connecticut. The Movado School District has helped the Ebel School implement ELT by offering technical assistance and securing funding to help sustain some

ELT initiatives beyond the length of the SIG grant. Movado officials worked closely with Ebel's principal to reallocate how time is used within the school day and still comply with the teachers' contracts.

Cartier District, Oregon. The Cartier School District does not provide its schools with direct funding for ELT; however, district officials said they work with school leaders to find other funding sources.

Invicta District, Oregon. The Invicta School District does not directly support ELT in its one SIG-funded school, Corduba. As part of its ELT initiative, however, Corduba requires students to earn college credit by either completing an internship or enrolling in the nearby community college, and tuition expenses are covered by the Invicta district's general state funds.

Poljot District, Oregon. Poljot district officials assisted the Kirov school leadership with its SIG application, helped coordinate new bus routes that were needed because of the expanded day, and coordinated the districtwide 21st CCLC grant that provides on-site afterschool programs for Kirov students.

Corum District, Virginia. When two schools in the Corum School District received SIG funds, the district expanded the school year and school day districtwide.

Minerva District, Virginia. In the Minerva district, the strong relationship between district and school officials was a significant factor in Pythagoras School's successful implementation of ELT. Minerva district officials and Pythagoras school leaders have a long history of collaboration, according to interviewees from both.

Tutima District, Virginia. The Tutima School District played a vital role in communicating with parents and other stakeholders about ELT initiatives in one of its schools. The district also provided opportunities for students or staff to find other schools if their schedules could not align with the longer school day. Students were given a window of opportunity to change schools as long as their newly selected school could accommodate an influx of students; only a few families took this option. The district also allowed teachers to transfer to other schools in the district if they had scheduling conflicts with the expanded day, but few teachers switched schools.

Challenges of Funding and Implementing ELT

The states, districts, and schools we studied cited a variety of challenges associated with implementing and continuing ELT initiatives. All of them faced challenges with the costs and sustainability of ELT. Other challenges included the coordination of multiple programs and reform initiatives, staffing challenges, teacher and student fatigue, and transportation and child care issues. Case study districts and schools are dealing with these problems in ways that recognize their local context.

FUNDING CHALLENGES

Funding and sustaining ELT is a major challenge for states, districts, and schools.

Expanded learning time is expensive; a study by the NCTL estimated the costs of implementing ELT to be between \$2.20 and \$5.23 per pupil per hour in districts that added between 132 and 540 hours to their school year. Even with federal and other funding, districts and schools sometimes had to scale back plans because of costs.

Thirteen of the 17 schools included in our case studies relied on federal SIG monies to fund at least a portion of their ELT initiatives, which raises concerns about sustaining ELT after SIG or other federal grants end. Interviewees in several states, districts, and schools reported that they were using or looking for other funding sources to sustain their ELT programs after federal SIG and 21st CCLC grants end. These sources included repurposing state and local education funds, forming partnerships with community organizations, and applying for funding through private foundations or organizations.

Relying on federal funds as a primary source. Districts and schools with ELT in Oregon receive no additional funding from the state for ELT initiatives and must cover the cost of these programs primarily with federal SIG and 21st CCLC funds. In order to supplement these funds, districts and schools often rely on community partners and other organizations to provide additional funding and services or find other sources of funding from external organizations. Because of inadequate funding, Santos High School in Oregon lacks sufficient staff to fully implement ELT programs. Principal Clarkson explained the problem:

The schools' budgets have been an issue for so long that generally all support staff have been cut back in order to preserve teaching staff. So you have fewer people to manage this complicated work and to manage the systems . . . We could use a lot more support.

Principal Thompson of Corduba High School agreed with this sentiment. The school has used some of its SIG funding to compensate teachers for their extra time. But once SIG funding expires, Thompson said he cannot “explicitly ask them to teach beyond their contract hours,” which will undoubtedly impact the school’s ELT program.

Combining federal and state funding. Some districts received state funding to implement ELT and used this in combination with the federal resources. For example, district and school officials in Virginia’s Minerva School District used state SOQ funds to sustain its ELT initiative in the Pythagoras School. Also in Virginia, the Corum School District uses a combination of federal and state resources for ELT, as well as federal Summer Food Service Program funds to provide breakfast and lunch to summer school students. Connecticut implements its own state-level initiatives focused on school improvement, so many SIG/priority schools may have access to multiple sources of funding for ELT.

Securing funding from outside partners. Many schools and districts have turned to external partners and community organizations for extra funding or assistance in providing academic and enrichment services to students. For example, such partnerships have enabled the Breitling School District in Connecticut to offer instructional activities to its students, such as a literacy program coupled with a local theater as well as a Department of Defense program linked to the science curriculum. Santos, in Oregon, works with the Galaxy Community Organization, which is funded and managed by the county. This organization offers both academic and non-academic extracurricular activities.

Planning for the end of federal grants. District and school leaders in the Seiko School District in Colorado were also cognizant of future funding challenges when they were planning for ELT and allocated existing funding in ways that would help sustain ELT in schools. Principal Hernandez of Sportura Elementary School said that his school chose to focus all federal funding on professional development so that the school would not need to cut instructional time or programs for students once the grants expired. Principal Grinberg of the Ebel School in Connecticut also looked to other sources of funding to extend some ELT initiatives beyond the three-year SIG grant; the school covered the 10% increase in teachers' salaries using the district's operational budget.

The Poljot School District in Oregon tried to prepare for the loss of federal funding for its 21st CCLC afterschool program by starting a Sustainability Team a few years ago. The district's 21st CCLC funding expires in 2018, and the afterschool programs are entirely dependent on this source of funding as they receive no additional money from the state. One of the goals of the team is to find alternative sources of funding for the 21st CCLC afterschool programs to ensure that they will continue beyond the federal funding term.

Cutting ELT when federal funding ended. In contrast, two case study schools in Connecticut, Ebel and Bienne, had to discontinue or scale back their ELT initiatives after their SIG funding expired. Ebel initially had longer instructional blocks for literacy and math two days a week, and Bienne had hired literacy and data facilitators to work with students and teachers on data-driven decision making and targeted interventions for students during ELT. However, both schools had to give up these SIG-funded programs after the grant expired because neither had funds to sustain them.

COORDINATING ELT WITH OTHER REFORM INITIATIVES

Managing several reforms at the same time proved to be a challenge in some case study schools. Most of these schools were implementing ELT simultaneously with other school improvement initiatives, as required by the SIG models.

Multiple reforms in SIG schools. A district leader from Glycine in Connecticut spoke about the challenge of juggling several reform initiatives at the same time; although the goals underlying these initiatives are worthy, this leader suggested that the district may need to streamline them in the future. The principal at Meylan in Glycine concurred and admitted that implementing so much change at once is really difficult.

Conflicts between local reforms and ELT. The interviewees from Seiko School District in Colorado said that coordinating federal, state, and local school policies was a major challenge because there was a conflict between the traditional system of education and the district's competency-based system (CBS). The CBS approach makes it difficult to keep track of instructional time. Under CBS, students also receive credit for learning that occurs outside of school, which is not addressed in federal requirements. Finally, federal ELT requirements emphasize quantity of time, but the district chooses to focus on quality of time.

Seiko's CBS policy also presents difficulties at the state level. For example, interviewees said that state assessments conflict with the implementation of CBS because they are given at a specific time and grade level rather than when the student is most prepared, which is a key aspect of the CBS philosophy. In addition, district and school leaders said that the assessments used under CBS are a better measure of student achievement than state-level exams.

POLICIES FOR TEACHER COMPENSATION AND TEACHER CONTRACTS

Case study districts and schools had varying experiences in negotiating teacher contract changes related to ELT, such as compensating teachers for additional time. In some sites, these negotiations were more cooperative; in others, they were more contentious; and in some districts, the need for contractual changes was avoided altogether by staggering teacher schedules or partnering with outside organizations.

Building extra teacher time and compensation into contracts. District and school leaders in Connecticut reported having positive and cooperative relationships with their local teachers' unions. In the Glycine district, which added 30 minutes to the day in all of its schools, this extension of time was built into a new teacher contract through the traditional collective bargaining process and was detailed in a memorandum of understanding between the school board and teachers' union. Rather than funding this extra staff time as a separate salary item, the new contract raised teachers' salaries by a specific amount over three years and extended the school day as part of a package, according to one district leader.

Working with the teachers' union. Leaders of the Ebel School in Connecticut's Movado School District "worked closely with the union president," according to Principal Grinberg, to give teachers a 10% salary increase to compensate them for the extra hour of common planning and professional development time.

Staggering teacher schedules to keep contract hours the same. At Grenchen, school and district leaders avoided contract renegotiations by staggering teacher schedules and coordinating programs with outside organizations and community partners; the total hours for teachers are the same, although their starting and ending times vary.

Limiting ELT due to teacher contracts. In Oregon, negotiating teacher contracts to accommodate ELT posed greater challenges. An official with the Cartier School District said it was difficult to change school schedules because the teachers' contract limited the number of students that teachers could supervise and specified when teacher-led activities can take place. This inflexibility forced the district to work within the existing contracts.

Increasing flexibility in teacher contracts though state policies. In Colorado, Pathfinder School has Innovation status, which gives it more flexibility with teacher contracts and collective bargaining agreements. Principal Akira said she has greater control over time, personnel, and money, which allowed her to implement ELT initiatives more easily at her school. Similarly, all schools in the Casio School District that added extra time were Innovation schools, which enabled them to set their own schedules without major contractual obstacles, according to Ms. Terada, a district official.

STAFFING CHALLENGES AND TURNOVER

In several case study districts and schools, difficulties finding sufficient staff and high levels of staff turnover affected the implementation and quality of ELT initiatives. In some cases these issues were resolved, but in many cases they remain a challenge.

High staff turnover. Poljot School District in Oregon experienced high staff turnover in its afterschool programs during the past year. This affected program quality, according to the 21st CCLC coordinator, because the district sometimes lacked adequately trained staff members to put into participating schools. This also put an additional strain on the 21st CCLC staff, who had to constantly train new hires for the afterschool programs.

Difficulties managing outside staff and volunteers. School and district leaders in Grenchen in Connecticut's Breitling district said it was time-consuming and sometimes difficult to manage partnerships with external organizations to ensure they support high-quality ELT activities aligned to the curriculum. Moreover, the wide range of experience among the volunteers and staff was an issue because some did not have classroom management skills to handle the students in the program.

Teacher shortages. Some districts and schools face shortages of certified teachers to place in their schools. Officials in Glycine School District, a high-need and lower-paying district in Connecticut, said that teachers often choose to go to neighboring districts with better pay. The district has also had an attrition rate of approximately 50% in the past three years, which hampers implementation of school improvement initiatives, including ELT.

Initial resistance from teachers. School leaders in the Corum School District in Virginia said they faced resistance from teachers when ELT was first implemented. In the district, teacher contracts include 200 teacher work days. Teachers only worked 175 days before ELT was implemented—after its implementation, teachers started working 182 days. Although the district was permitted to add extra school days under the existing contract, leaders were hesitant to extend the school year without teachers' feedback. To solicit input, the district surveyed teachers and parents about the best way to implement an extended school year within district-established parameters. The district then implemented ELT in a way that reflected teachers' and parents' voices, although teachers remained frustrated about working a longer day and year without a pay increase. Ultimately, district and school employees adapted to the new ELT initiatives, reported principals at Romulus High School and Artisan Elementary School.

Officials in Kirov Elementary School in Oregon also faced teacher resistance when they added 30 minutes to the school day. However, these officials said that once teachers saw the benefits of ELT on student performance their resistance waned.

TEACHER AND STUDENT FATIGUE

Teacher and student fatigue from longer school days has been a problem in all four states studied. Some schools adapted their schedules or interspersed enrichment activities to deal with this challenge.

Problems with teacher fatigue. At Pathfinder School in Colorado, "building up that stamina" for teachers to work an extra hour per day under the ELT schedule has been a

challenge, said Principal Akira, and “teachers have had to really work on that.” Students also had to adjust to the longer day, the principal said, but “quickly got used to it.”

Problems with students staying focused. At the Ebel School in Connecticut, teachers had trouble “keeping the kids focused” when the school adopted longer instructional blocks, said Principal Grinberg, while teachers suffered burnout from these longer periods. Grinberg decided to get rid of the longer blocks on the grounds that the negative effects outweighed any positive outcomes of longer instructional periods. Instead, the school continued to focus ELT on additional time for teacher collaboration.

Enrichment activities for variety. Other schools in the study are combating fatigue by balancing academic with enrichment activities for students and coordinating with community partners to provide teachers with more planning time. Principal Moon at Frogman in Colorado explained the rationale for this approach:

The goal is to bring in outside organizations to run activities, clubs, classes, give kids choice, so that the kids are still here for an extended day [but] they get something besides just reading, writing, arithmetic in one day. And the teachers get . . . over an hour and a half extra planning . . .

Although the eight-plus hour day at Frogman is long for both students and teachers, Moon admitted, she is hopeful that the modified schedule with more time for student enrichment and teacher planning would help alleviate some of this fatigue.

TRANSPORTATION AND CHILD CARE

Interviewees cited problems scheduling bus routes to accommodate ELT. In rural areas in particular, where students already had long bus commutes, ELT sometimes compounded these issues by requiring students to leave home very early and return home late. Some study participants also mentioned challenges related to child care for younger children. Districts addressed these challenges in different ways.

Rerouting or changing bus schedules. Virginia’s Minerva district added instructional minutes before and after school at Pythagoras School. Although the basic bus schedule remained the same, the buses were rerouted to drop off Pythagoras students first in the mornings and pick them up last in the afternoon. In Virginia’s Corum district, which had implemented ELT districtwide, the bus schedule was changed for all students.

Differences in rural, urban, and suburban settings. Rural areas in Oregon, including Kirov Elementary School, also faced similar challenges with long commute times and the same buses serving all of the district’s elementary, middle, and high schools. In the larger, more urban Casio district in Colorado, however, coordinating buses can also be a logistical struggle, even in situations where just 15 minutes are added to the school day or a second round of pickups is required. In contrast, Premier School, in Colorado, was able to expand its learning day by 15 minutes by taking advantage of its suburban setting. Unlike schools in the rest of the Seiko district, families at Premier can all walk their children to school; therefore the school day is not bound by the district’s bus schedule.

Impact of child care on ELT attendance. At Oceanus School in Colorado, providing child care for younger children has presented a logistical challenge, according to Principal

Diver. The school offers an early childhood program as an integral part of its instructional model, but has not been able to secure funding for extended care within the building for children ages 3 to 5. This negatively impacts participation rates in the afterschool program among elementary-age children with young siblings. It has a similar impact on participation during the additional hour of instructional time for 4th and 5th graders.

Impact of ELT on Students, Teachers, Schools, and Communities

Study participants cited several impacts of their schools' ELT initiatives, including some evidence of improved student achievement and high school graduation rates, improved teacher collaboration and instructional practices, more efficient use of school time, and improved school climate and culture. Nevertheless, the ELT programs in some schools were still in the early stages of implementation at the time of the study, and all of the interviewees emphasized that ELT initiatives were merely one component of broader school reforms.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND GRADUATION RATES

Leaders in several districts and schools believed that ELT has led to improved student academic performance and persistence. They cautioned, however, that gains in student achievement cannot be directly linked to expanded learning time.

Gains on assessments. An official from Casio reported that several schools in her district have made gains in achievement on the Colorado state assessments. “[T]hey still have work to do but they have come a long way in terms of student achievement, and extended day was a large part of the turnaround strategy in that area,” she said. Principal Moon cited growth in student achievement on interim assessments at Frogman Charter School as one success stemming from additional time for instruction. With the double block of instructional time in ELA, “kids’ performance on the IA [interim assessment] went up 30 percentage points.” Another Colorado school, Astron, recently became the highest achieving school in the district after being ranked among the lowest a few years before.

Since Bienne Elementary in Connecticut received a SIG in 2010, the total percentage of its students scoring proficient in reading and math on state tests has increased by at least 10 percentage points in each tested grade, and far more in some grades. Principal Fischer attributed these achievement gains to multiple school improvement initiatives, including the increased focus on academic rigor, use of data, common planning time for teachers, and the longer school day.

Improved graduation rates. Officials at a few of the high schools involved in this study said they had seen improved graduation rates. At Corduba High School in Oregon, an alternative high school that recently changed from a partial-day to full-day schedule, Principal Thompson said that the ELT options offered to students have contributed to increases in graduation rates and student achievement. Dual enrollment in courses at the community college, another component of the high school’s ELT initiative, has helped students understand the relevance of their high school courses and encouraged them to complete their education, Thompson said. In school year 2013-14, Corduba’s graduation

rate rose to 25%, compared with 11% in 2011-12. District and school officials viewed this as a major sign of progress since the implementation of ELT, and the school’s dropout rate is now the lowest among the alternative schools in the region.

Meylan High School’s graduation rate has increased by 10 percentage points since the school moved to trimester scheduling and academy structures under a SIG grant, according to Principal Walser. The number of students who failed two or more classes has also decreased by about 25%. In addition, the Advanced Placement program has expanded, and the school climate has become more strongly focused on academics. “[T]here has been a huge change in our school climate, and there’s been a huge change in the instruction that’s taking place in the classroom,” said Walser. When asked specifically about the additional 30 minutes of time during the school day, Walser said that the ELT component was just “one piece of a major restructuring and redesign.”

Too early to see impact in some schools. It is too soon to know whether ELT programs are making a difference in some of the other case study schools. For example, Grenchen school officials in Connecticut felt it was a little early in the process to see complete success of ELT. (The school staff spent one year planning the ELT program in conjunction with the National Center on Time and Learning’s TIME Collaborative, and the CEP case study took place during the first year of implementation.) Initial formative assessments show improvements in learning, according to the staff interviewed. Although they cannot say definitively that these improvements are a result of ELT, staff do feel that the blocks of time for differentiated interventions in literacy and math have helped. Grenchen is not a SIG or a priority school but has received a federal 21st CCLC grant and uses these funds for programs during its expanded school day.

IMPROVED TEACHER COLLABORATION, INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE

Interviewees said that providing teachers with more time to plan, collaborate, and participate in professional development has led to improvements in the quality of instruction and has ultimately made their schools more successful. ELT efforts directed toward teacher development have also improved teacher capacity and confidence, according to interviewees.

More rigorous instruction. At Ebel School in Connecticut, which was labeled a priority school under the state’s ESEA waiver, common planning time, professional development, and collaboration have led to increased instructional rigor, according to Principal Grinberg. He specifically noted that these ELT efforts have allowed teachers to work together to solve the school’s challenges and improve student achievement.

More effective practices. Principal Garcia of Astron Elementary School in Colorado’s Seiko district felt that using ELT for professional development helped the teachers in her school improve their teaching by building their skill sets and knowledge of effective instructional practices.

Better use of data. At Premier Elementary in the Seiko district, professional development helped teachers to change the way they used data to improve instruction, said Mr. Gonzalez, the former principal who is now a district leader.

At Bienne Elementary in Connecticut, teachers worked with data and literacy facilitators, who helped school staff make data-driven instructional decisions and identify students in need of targeted interventions. In addition, teachers had 60-minute blocks of common planning time during which they analyzed student performance data in teams twice a week. The principal said these activities allowed the school's teaching staff to be "very fluid with the kids' needs."

MORE EFFICIENT USE OF SCHOOL TIME, IMPROVED SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

One of the main accomplishments of ELT was to change how schools leveraged and used time and resources, according to case study interviewees. This often resulted in the more efficient and effective use of existing time and resources, as well as newly added time.

Multiple ways to leverage time better. A district official from Casio district in Colorado said that schools participating in ELT shifted their use of resources, redesigned classroom instruction, and involved community partners in serving their students. Principal Akira of Pathfinder School echoed this sentiment, noting that ELT allowed her school to purposefully leverage time each day for teachers to plan thoughtfully and strategically, which made teachers more effective teachers and the school more successful.

TIME Collaborative planning process. Connecticut's Grenchen Elementary school participated in NCTL's TIME Collaborative program. As part of the Collaborative's planning process, the school received expertise in redesigning the school schedule and using creative approaches to expanding learning time. Ms. Colt, an instructional coach at the school, said the school's work with NCTL "forced people to really think out of the box and to think differently about how we can make different things happen for kids."

More efficient use of existing time. The implementation of ELT also forced some schools to analyze how well they were using the time they already had, and in some cases to conclude they were not using time efficiently. Staff at Artisan Elementary School in Virginia used the School Time Analysis Tool from the NCTL, which revealed that the school was losing time when students transitioned between classrooms. This ultimately led the school to adopt a new organizational model in which the teachers, rather than the students, would rotate to different classrooms, thereby allowing them to increase the number of instructional minutes.

Multiple benefits of afterschool programs. A few school leaders pointed to specific benefits from afterschool programs beyond providing students with additional enrichment and academic activities. In the Casio district in Colorado, principals at both Oceanus School and Pathfinder School viewed their afterschool programs as major successes of ELT. The program at Oceanus School provides students with dinner, as well as tutoring and homework support. "[W]e're providing for our neighborhood students after [school] care in a safe environment. It's food that doesn't cost anything, a major meal . . . tutoring, homework support, caring relationships with adults," said Principal Diver.

Principal Akira of Pathfinder school noted that the services provided after school by the Boys and Girls Club and Meals on Wheels have an impact on the community:

Sadly, too often kids are going home to an environment that isn't terribly healthy and isn't very nurturing, and even spending a little extra time at school, making good decisions and being around thoughtful and caring adults, I think, has some . . . positive effects in the community and in the child's life.

Improvements in school culture. At Frogman Charter School, also in the Casio district, ELT has given the school and community more time to focus on improving school culture and support systems, according to Principal Moon.

ELT AS PART OF BROADER SCHOOL REFORMS

Nearly all of the interviewees in the study agreed that ELT can be an effective school improvement strategy but it is only one component of a comprehensive school improvement plan. They cautioned that ELT must be carefully planned and implemented, and they stressed quality over quantity of time. Simply adding more instructional time to the school day and doing more of the same was not an effective use of time, they said, and would not lead to improvement. What matters is how districts and schools use their extra time.

ELT was extremely beneficial for students who needed extra time or targeted instruction to master subject material, interviewees said. It was also successful in providing teachers with more opportunities to collaborate and participate in professional development, improving school culture and climate, and providing students with additional instructional and enrichment opportunities outside the regular school day. Several interviewees agreed that both academic and enrichment opportunities for students, as well as time for teacher collaboration and professional development, were important components of school improvement.

A few state, district, and school officials noted other strategies may be more effective than ELT in improving student achievement.

Importance of targeted interventions. Principal Clarkson of Santos High School in Oregon said that improving regular classroom instruction and providing targeted interventions to struggling students are more worthwhile initiatives than ELT.

A focus on the broader school context. In Colorado's Casio district, Ms. Terada in the district office and Principal Diver of Oceanus School recommended that instead of focusing on ELT strategies, school reforms must focus on the broader school context, including major structural changes that affect low-performing schools. Simply adding more instructional time in struggling schools is unlikely to promote school improvement, said Terada. Diver proposed that "more focused instructional intervention" was a more effective approach to school improvement than ELT because that extra time can lead to student burnout.

Policy Implications and Concluding Thoughts

Findings from CEP's case studies of districts and schools in four states have several implications for policies to improve low-performing schools that use ELT strategies.

- **ELT can be a beneficial approach to improving low-performing schools, but it is only one component of a comprehensive school improvement effort.** Some districts and schools have seen positive impacts of ELT in low-performing schools, such as improved graduation rates and student achievement on various assessments. In other districts, it was too soon to determine the impact. Study participants agreed, however, that ELT should be accompanied by other strategies to provide high-quality instruction and maximize learning time.
- **Districts and schools need flexibility to design ELT strategies suited to their specific contexts.** Implementation of ELT varied considerably and was often contingent on such factors as state policies, local governance structures, school context, and teacher and student needs. For example, schools that had added flexibilities through special state programs, such as Innovation schools in Colorado, reported fewer challenges implementing ELT programs than some other schools. The ability of districts to negotiate with teachers' unions about adding learning time was also affected by state and local context. And rural areas experienced particular challenges with student transportation related to longer school days with long commute times.
- **ELT policies should place priority on additional time for teacher collaboration and professional development as well as student instruction.** State, district, and school leaders stressed the importance of improving the quality of instruction, which often meant more time for teacher collaboration and professional development, rather than focusing on increasing the quantity of instructional time for students alone. Interviewees viewed additional time for teacher collaboration and professional development as a productive investment that ultimately improved the quality of instruction for students. Some participants also said that the benefits of teacher collaboration would outlast the cycle of the federal funding and may impact student achievement for years after SIG funding expired.
- **Implementing and sustaining ELT initiatives entail additional costs, so any long-term effort will require a reliable funding source.** Expanding learning time typically involves additional expenses, such as compensating teachers for additional time, staffing before-and after-school or summer programs, and arranging transportation for longer school days. Sustaining ELT initiatives after federal grants end was often cited as a challenge, particularly by SIG-funded schools. Repurposing other federal grants, such as 21st CCLC grants and Title I set-aside funds, to support ELT was not viewed as a viable strategy by most interviewees. Several leaders noted that focusing 21st CCLC grants on the students with the greatest needs was a better use of limited funding than supporting schoolwide ELT efforts.

CEP's research indicates that the ELT provisions of the SIG and ESEA waiver requirements are performing a valuable function by encouraging the nation's most struggling schools to rethink the use of time, one of their most valuable assets for improving teaching and learning. State, district, and school interviewees in the four states recognized that ELT initiatives could be beneficial in improving low-performing schools. Federal guidance could help facilitate more thoughtful use of time by providing increased flexibility to customize school improvement efforts to meet local needs and contexts.

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