Expanding Learning Opportunities for Students
Guidance and Promising Practices

Guidance – June 3, 2010

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has developed initial guidance to assist districts in finding more time in existing school schedules. The School Turnaround Grants require the following:

> Describe how the school will establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours (compared to time prior to the start of the Transformation model) to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography and (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations

This document represents a compilation of research, school profiles and practical examples related to how schools have expanded learning opportunities for students.

Low(er) Cost Options for Extending Learning Time

By Staggering Teacher Schedules

Note: While both these arrangements can be and are done in the context of existing teachers union contracts, in this case both with the UFT in New York, they may require side letter agreements or memoranda of understanding between the teachers union and the district to implement.

UFT Charter School

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Charter High School in New York City extends learning time for students, within the constraints of the existing NYC teacher contract, by staggering start times for teachers in the school. A typical NYC high school operates on an 8-period day for both students and teachers. The UFT High School operates a 9 period day for students by staggering teacher schedules so that some teachers start teaching during period 1 and leave after period 8, while other teachers come in after period 1 and leave after period 9. This works because, in any given period in a typical high school, some percentage of teachers are not teaching because they have prep periods or administrative responsibilities during that period. By avoiding scheduling teacher prep or administrative periods during the first or last period of the day, the school can actually serve the same number of students with fewer teachers during that time. This does, however, require some creativity and intentionality in designing teacher and master schedules, as well as some additional teachers. The exact number of additional teachers needed--and therefore additional costs to extend learning time--will vary for individual schools depending on how they schedule. But, with careful scheduling, the percentage increase in the number of teachers needed is smaller than the percentage increase in the school day for students--making this a cost-effective way to extend learning time.

Although the UFT charter school uses staggered schedules to extend an 8 period school day to 9 periods, a school could also use further staggering to extend an 8 period school day to 10 periods (ie, some teachers would come in after period 2 and stay through period 10). A school using a 6 or 7 hour period, or a 4 period block schedule, could use the same staggered approach to extend the school day by a period or block, and would get greater increases in the length of the school day from doing so.

Generation Schools

Generation Schools operates a high school in New York City, working in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers, the NYC teachers' union.

Generation Schools uses staggered schedules and dual roles for teachers to offer an extended school day and year for students, increased common planning time for teachers, and smaller class sizes in core subjects at the same costs as a traditional school.

Teachers teach for 180 days a year, as in a typical school, but students attend school for 200 days. Throughout the year, grade-level groups of teachers have two four-week-long (20 day) breaks from teaching. Three of these weeks are personal vacation time for teachers, and the fourth week is used for common planning time and professional development for all teachers in the grade. While the teachers are on leave, their students participate in month-long "intensive" classes focused on college- and career-exploration (for example, one intensive might be focused on health professions and exploring health

careers). These intensives are taught by a pool of teachers who rotate through teaching students in each grade while the regular teachers in that grade are on leave. (The 200-day school year breaks down into ten 20-day periods, with each teacher, whether an intensive teacher or regular grade level teacher, teaching during eight of those periods, but students in school for all ten.)

The school day at Generation Schools runs from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, slightly longer than a traditional school day. The school days is organized into two 90-minute "foundation" classes in core academic subjects (English, math, social studies, and science), which take place in the morning, and three 60-minute "studio" classes (electives, such as art, music, and foreign language), which take place in the afternoon. Classes in the morning foundation courses are small (14-16 students), while classes in the afternoon studio classes are larger (24-26 students), allowing fewer teachers to teach the same number of students at one time in the afternoon, and freeing teachers up for common planning time. Typically, a teacher teachers one studio class and has two hours of planning time with other teachers each afternoon. (Some other school staff besides regular teachers, such as "intensive" teachers, also teach studio classes, making it possible for teachers to have two hours of planning time.) The teacher work day when teachers are teaching is slightly longer than in a typical NYC school (7 hours, compared to 6 hours and 50 minutes), but the school makes up for this with shorter work days for teachers during the two weeks a year that are used for planning and training (5 hours and 45 minutes), so teachers actually don't work any longer than in a traditional school.

This model does require slightly more classroom teachers than a typical school would have for the same number of students. But at scale, Generation Schools is able to implement the model with no more staff than a typical school. Ninety percent of the school's staff are classroom teachers, but many have dual roles and responsibilities, such as librarian or team leader, allowing the school to focus more of its staffing resources directly in the classroom and providing professional advancement and leadership opportunities for teachers. Generation Schools is also able to cut down on administrative staffing costs by using volunteers from programs like ReServe (a service program for retirees) for some functions, such as bookkeeping, and by sharing some staff, such as an English language acquisition specialist, with other schools.

Using Volunteers and AmeriCorps Workers

Reading Partners is a tutoring model that matches struggling elementary-grades readers, as identified by their teachers, with one-on-one volunteer reading tutors. Reading Partners trains volunteers and provides them a curriculum and materials to work from that match where the student currently is in terms of reading skills. An AmeriCorps volunteer coordinates the tutoring and provides support to the volunteer tutors in implementing the curriculum and working with children. Because the tutoring is provided by volunteers, costs to districts and schools are very modest. Reading Partners data shows that students gain one grade level in reading performance for every 30 hours they spend with a Reading Partners tutor.

Reading Partners can be implemented as a "pull-out" model during the school day, or an after school program. In both circumstances it is effective at providing targeted support to build the reading skills of struggling students. As an afterschool program, it could be used to extend the school day for struggling students.

Reading Partners currently operates only in California, but is seeking to expand to the East Coast, and is currently in conversations with funders and school districts in Boston and Washington, D.C. about

expanding to these areas. If Reading Partners expands to Boston, it may be a potential partner for some districts and schools in extending the school day for struggling students.

Through Technology

Rocketship Education, a California elementary school, uses technology to leverage educational resources to provide more learning time for students and make more effective use of teacher time.

Unlike a traditional elementary school, where students spend nearly their entire day with the same teacher for all core subjects, Rocketship students rotate among teachers, who specialize in either Reading/English language arts or math. There are four classes of students in each grade, and three teachers: two specialize in Reading/English language arts and one in math. The student day is divided into four learning periods (as well as lunch), and each class of students spends one period a day with each teacher in the grade, and the fourth period in a "Learning Lab." Time in Learning Lab is divided between two types of activities: A reading center, in which students independently read leveled readers matched to their reading level, and a computer center, in which work independently on computers, progressing at their own rate through an online curriculum matched to their individual skill levels. Two classes of students, from different grades, are in the Learning Lab during each period. An AmeriCorpo volunteer of City Year Corps Member supervises children in the Learning Lab, rather than a certified teacher. This allows Rocketship to operate a longer day while employing only 75 percent of the teachers a typical public school would employ.

The Learning Lab uses an "off-the-shelf" online curriculum in the computer center (there are a variety of programs a district or school seeking to replicate the Rocketship approach could use, including Renaissance Learning Accelerated math and K12.com online curricula), and Rigby leveled readers with Accelerated Reader for the reading center. Through these tools, Learning Lab provides a structured way to increase the amount of time students spend practicing reading, math, and other skills. This allows teachers to use class time more efficiently, because they do not have to devote as much class time to student skill practice--which often consumes significantly class time in a typical school. It also provides a structured way for children to get more skill practice than in a typical school day, which is particularly important for the disadvantaged students that Rocketship serves, who may need more practice to master skills. Both the online curriculum used in the computer center and the Accelerated Reader used in the reading center include regular assessments that students must pass in order to advance, providing teachers with data about students' academic progress and areas of mastery and struggle, which they can use to inform instruction.

Example Schedule for fourth-grade students

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 1)	Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 2)	Math (certified math teacher)	Learning lab

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 2)	Math (certified math teacher)	Learning lab	Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 1)
Specials (teachers have common planning time)			
Lunch			
Math (certified math teacher)	Learning lab	Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 1)	Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 2)
Learning lab	Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 1)	Reading/ELA (certified Reading/ELA teacher 2)	Math (certified math teacher)

This model may not work exactly in a more traditional school, but there are several ways that a district could adapt it to increase learning time in a low-performing school. It is important to recognize that because the Learning Lab is not overseen by a certified teacher, it does not count towards state-mandated instructional minutes, and so must be in addition to the regular school day.

First, a school that was undergoing significant staff changes as a result of transformation might be able to fully implement this approach. Hiring fewer teachers, and having them specialize in Reading/ELA or math, could make it easier for the school to hire highly effective teachers for the school.

Second, a school could combine the use of Learning Labs with staggered start times for teachers to offer a longer start day. In other words, some percentage of the school's teachers could both start and end the school day later than others, with children who were not in a classroom with a teacher during the first and last periods of the day attending Learning Labs under the supervision of an AmeriCorps volunteer or City Year Corps Member. There would be significant logistical challenges to this arrangement: If a district staggered schedules so that half the teachers were starting a block later than the rest, then the Learning Lab would need to be able to accommodate half the school's students at once, which may not be possible. In practice, this model would probably require some teachers to work a longer schedule, with commensurate increase in compensation, or some teachers to work a longer day with a free period in the middle of it (which might appeal to some teachers, since it would allow them to schedule errands, doctor's appointments, etc. during the school day--particularly if all teachers had the free block in the middle of the day only one day a week, which could be done with creative scheduling).

Third, a school could establish a Learning Lab to provide extended practice time for struggling students in the before-school, after-school, or weekend hours. Students would be referred to the Learning Lab if teachers diagnosed that they needed additional practice in reading/English language art or math. Because the Applied Reader and other online curricula deliver lessons and practice keyed to the individual student's reading or instructional level, this is one way to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of struggling students. The after/before school Learning Labs could be overseen by Americorps

Volunteers, City Year Corps Members, or community volunteers. Schools or districts could supplement this by hiring a smaller number of teachers or other certified staff to provide targeted and more intensive re-teaching for smaller groups of students, based on identified areas where children need additional support. Using Learning Labs to extend the school day for all students in the after/before-school or weekend hours would probably not work because it would require a computer for every child in the school.

Use of Time: Before and After

Learning Lab Model

BEFORE

Teacher Schedule	
Start time	8:30 AM
Teaching minutes	270
Planning time (students in specials)	45
Break (students in recess)	15
Lunch	30
Total time at work	360 minutes
End of school day	2:30 PM

Student Schedule	
Start time	8:30 AM
Time with teacher	270
Specials	45
Recess	15
Lunch	30
Total time in school	360 minutes
End of school day	2:30 PM

AFTER

Start of School Day: 8:30 AM

For a K-5 school with full-day kindergarten, 2 grades of students would have

	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
8:30 AM	Core teacher	Learning Lab	Special	Core teacher	Core teacher
9:00 AM					
			Recess		
9:30 AM			Core teacher		
10:00 AM		Core teacher		Learning lab	
10:30 AM					Recess
					Special
11:00 AM					
11:30 AM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:00 PM	Core teacher	Core teacher	Learning lab	Core teacher	Core teacher
12:30 PM		Special			
1:00 PM					
		Recess			
1:30 PM	Special	Core teacher	Core teacher		
2:00 PM					
	Recess				
2:30 PM	Learning lab				Learning Lab or middle school prep
3:00 PM				Recess	
				Special	
3:30 PM					
Total Minutes: Students					
Classroom teacher	270	270	270	270	270
Specials	45	45	45	45	45

	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade
Learning Lab	90	90	90	90	90
Recess	15	15	15	15	15
Lunch	30	30	30	30	30
Total learning time	405	405	405	405	405
Total time in school	450	450	450	450	450
Student start time	8:30 AM	8:30 AM	8:30 AM	8:30 AM	8:30 AM
Students dismissed	4:00 PM	4:00 PM	4:00 PM	4:00 PM	4:00 PM
Total Minutes: Teachers					
Teaching Time	270 min	270 min	270 min	270 min	270 min
Planning time	45 min (during special)	45 min (during special)	75 min (during learning lab)	75 minutes (during learning lab)	45 min (during special)
Break	15 min (during recess)	15 min (during recess)	15 min (during learning lab)	15 min (during learning lab)	15 min (during recess)
Duty-free lunch	30 min.	30 min.	30 min.	30 min.	30 min.
Total time:	360 min.	360 min.	390 min.	390 min.	360 min.
Start of day	8:30 AM	10:00 AM	9:30 AM	8:30 AM	8:30 AM
End of day	2:30 PM	4:00 PM	4:00 PM	4:00 PM	2:30 PM

Learning Lab is a structured time for students to get additional practice in basic skills. During learning lab, half the students are independently reading books that match their reading level, and the other half of students are working at computers, progressing at their own rates through an online curriculum.

After 45 minutes, students switch activities. Both the reading and computer labs include regular computer-based assessments that gauge children's progress, ensure they are working at the right level, and provide data for their teachers. Students in the lab are supervised by AmeriCorps volunteers or trained paraprofessionals who enforce the school's code of conduct and ensure that students remain on-task.

Teachers who have learning lab in the middle of the day work a 30 minute longer day than others. They teach the same amount of time but have an additional 30 minutes of planning time. The school could deal with this scheduling challenge by:

- Rotating schedules among classes and grades so that teachers have the shorter day 3x a week and the longer day twice a week (all teachers would work an additional hour per week).
- Adding a half hour of planning time for all teachers and paying them for an additional half hour per day of work.
- Shortening the learning lab and lengthening specials, if feasible (this would result in a slightly longer work day for all teachers).

Under this proposed schedule, the school needs to be equipped to offer learning lab to 2 grade levels of students at a time. Alternatively, to reduce the learning lab costs, the school could:

- Recruit community volunteers, high school, and college work study students to provide all students with a one-on-one tutoring or mentoring experience one day a week, in lieu of learning lab
- Offer students special enrichment activities one day a week in lieu of learning lab, such as field trips or assemblies. These activities could be supervised by paraprofessionals, parents, and community volunteers.
- Offer all 5th graders a "middle school prep" class instead of learning lab, focusing on study skills, organization, and basic skills in preparation for middle school.

One thing you would not want to do is to offer one grade of students early release one day each week, because that would be a nightmare for families in terms of childcare and transportation arrangements.

Costs:

Learning lab:

- Library of books, sorted and matched to children's reading levels.
- Computers with high-speed internet connections that are in good repair so that children can use them with minimal frustration. There should be enough computers for half of the children in each grade to use them at one time, plus a few additional computers that can be used if one is not functioning, and for children in the reading lab to complete online quizzes when they finish a book.
- Licensing fees for online curriculum (there are a wide range of options and price points. some curriculum is available for free on the web, but may not be well-aligned with the school's curriculum)

Personnel costs:

- Depending on how school decides to schedule, some additional compensation to teachers for increased planning time (2.5 hours/week for 2/5 of teachers, hour/week for all teachers, or 2.5 hours a week if the school decides to extend planning time for all teachers)
- Americorps volunteers or paraprofessionals to supervise children in lab. Ratio of adults to students should be at least as high as in regular classroom.

Alternatives

- If school uses alternative scheduling strategies described above:
- Community mentoring for all children: Mentoring curriculum and mentor coordinator. (.5 FTE position. Could be a paraprofessional or AmeriCorps volunteer)
- Enrichment activities: Costs of enrichment activities, as well as staff to coordinate. (Could be a paraprofessional or AmeriCorps volunteer)
- Middle school prep: Teacher for middle school prep class (.25 FTE). Could be staff shared with middle school or another school. Alternatively, school could offer 5th grade teachers additional pay to teach this class.

Other Sources

Comprehensive bibliography of articles, research and writing on use of time in school
Done in conjunction with CT Department of Education
http://www.ctserc.org/library/bibfiles/blocksched.pdf

On The Clock research paper with recommendations for improving use of time
http://www.educationsector.org/usr_doc/OntheClock.pdf

From the National Center on Time and Learning, a paper that documents how six urban school districts structure time compared to nine Leading Edge high schools.
http://erstrategies.org/resources/details/time_attention_in_urban_high_schools/?/documents/TimeandAttentionFINALApril2010.pdf

Council of Chief State School Officers:
Summer Learning Opportunities in High Poverty Schools
http://www.ccsso.org/content/PDFs/Summer%20Learning.pdf

Extended Learning Opportunities in Fostering Academic Achievement: Selected School Profiles – 5 profiles developed out of the Council's extensive research on extended learning programs in high-performing, high poverty

Kentucky school profile http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/Meyzeek.pdf
Maryland school profile http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/ForestHeights.pdf
New York City school profile http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/Hostos.pdf
Mississippi school profile http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/PassChristian.pdf
Queens New York school profile http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/PS150.pdf

Characteristics of Effective Extended Learning Programs
NSACA Conference, Memphis, TN, March 7-9, 2002 (PowerPoint Presentation)
http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/NSACAconf.ppt

Extended Learning Opportunities from 6 states
http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/elireport.pdf

http://www.ccsso.org/projects/Extended_Learning_Opportunities/ELO_Publications/6393.cfm