



Briefing Memo

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act

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Driving Education Reform with Stimulus Funds: Redesigning Schools and Expanding Learning Time

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The Challenge

President Obama and Secretary Duncan are calling on states to accelerate education reform and creatively use ARRA funds to impact long-term school improvements, one of the boldest of which is to rethink the traditional school calendar. In President Obama's March 9th education speech, he declared, *"We can no longer afford an academic calendar designed when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing the land at the end of the day. The calendar may have once made sense, but today, it puts us at a competitive disadvantage."*

A redesigned and longer school day can enable policymakers to address several education challenges through one reform strategy. These challenges include: (1) closing the unrelenting achievement gap; (2) broadening curriculum options in order to better engage students and counter the dropout crisis; and (3) the need to improve teacher skills.

The Solution—Using ARRA funds to Launch Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiatives

The most recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education builds on the President's call for reform and encourages states to use ARRA funds to *"add time to the school day and year, and redesign the school schedule to increase time for core academics, enrichment and staff collaboration."*

States have an unprecedented opportunity to use ARRA funds to design, plan and implement initiatives to add learning time to the school day and year. A model to look to is the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative. In 2006, the National Center on Time & Learning's local affiliate, Massachusetts 2020, launched the Expanded Learning Time Initiative in partnership with the governor, Massachusetts state legislature and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The initiative created a policy model that allows traditional district schools to follow the lead of high-performing charter schools by adding significantly more learning time to a redesigned school day. Because traditional public schools educate the vast majority of America's youth (90%), the Expanded Learning Time model offers a tremendous opportunity to impact student achievement on a wide scale.

Currently, 26 schools and 13,500 students are participating. Schools, with district support, volunteer to redesign their schedules and add at least 300 more hours, the equivalent of about 50 extra school days, for all students. Schools decide if they will add time to the school day, school year or both. Teacher agreements are negotiated locally. Expectations for implementation are defined in seven areas that are essential to effective implementation, and each has supporting indicators that describe best practices. Planning, implementation proposals and technical assistance are aligned to these expectations.

Design Principles for ELTs developed by the National Center on Time & Learning are based on the successful Massachusetts model:

School-Level Design Principles

- ✓ **Significantly more school time:** School calendar includes at least 300 more hours per year (i.e., 2 hrs/day).
- ✓ **Increased participation: All students participate** in the redesigned and expanded school schedule.
- ✓ **Balanced use of expanded time:** Redesign adds time for: (1) core academics, (2) enrichment, and (3) teacher planning and professional development.
- ✓ **Redesign planning process:** School redesign teams — including teachers, administrators, union representatives, school partners and parents — create data-driven redesign plans.
- ✓ **Partners to expand opportunities:** Schools are encouraged to partner with community organizations, businesses, higher education institutions, art and cultural organizations, and health institutions to expand opportunities for students.

Policy-Level Design Principles

- ✓ **Voluntary school participation:** Schools apply to the state voluntarily and are approved for participation, based on the quality of their redesign plans.
- ✓ **Priority for schools serving high need students:** Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to need and benefit from additional learning time.
- ✓ **Technical assistance for redesign and implementation:** In order that time is not just added, but used well, schools often need outside experts to guide them to implement effective practices.
- ✓ **Public financing:** Implementation funded with public money, ideally through a state policy framework, ensures future sustainability and connections to the broader reform agenda.
- ✓ **Per child allocation:** Estimates are that 300 hours can be added to a school schedule for roughly 10-15% per child cost increase.¹
- ✓ **Evaluation and continuous improvement:** Constant review of data ensures continuous quality improvement.

Early results from the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time schools show that more time in traditional public schools can help close the achievement gap. With two years of data in hand, schools participating in the ELT initiative are moving more students to proficiency in math, English and science. Teacher satisfaction is high and data shows that significant numbers of teachers in ELT schools believe they have adequate time to complete the curriculum and meet the needs of all students. Significantly lower numbers of teachers from non-participating public schools believe those statements to be true.²

Funding Expanded Learning Time Initiatives

Expanded Learning Time helps to address the priority areas the Obama Administration has identified for ARRA:

- ✓ **Adopting rigorous college-and career ready standards and high-quality assessments:** Additional school time can help students meet these higher standards and give schools the time necessary to implement the changes needed (e.g. add algebra to all 8th-grade curriculums).
- ✓ **Establishing data systems and using data for improvement:** Once states and districts have quality data systems in place, administrators and teachers need more time to analyze and apply data to drive instructional changes.
- ✓ **Increasing teacher effectiveness:** Teachers identify “time” as the most important teaching condition for promoting student learning and believe the current school schedule is inadequate to complete the curriculum and meet students’ needs.
- ✓ **Turning around the lowest-performing schools and improving results for all students:** The Expanded Learning Time redesign process helps to develop a new vision and schedule to promote school and student success — one focused on maximizing time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded, engaged educational experience.

Based on previous studies³ and average per-pupil spending across the states, this program roughly would translate into a 10% to 15% increase over traditional education plans — or approximately \$1,085 to \$1,628 per student.⁴ Costs will vary greatly from state-to-state and even from district-to-district within states.

A variety of ARRA state funding streams could support Expanded Learning Time in schools including, the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, ESEA Title I and Title I School Improvement grants (for eligible schools). Although the guidelines are not scheduled to be released until June, all indications are that the ARRA Race to the Top fund (State Incentive Grants-\$4.35 billion) will be structured to support innovations like ELT, as well.

When Funding Runs Out in Two Years, How Will States Support Expanded Learning Time Initiatives?

States such as Massachusetts have made funding for Expanded Learning Time a priority within their policy and financing framework to address the needs of underperforming students and schools. State investments are important to ensure long-term impact. In addition, it is very likely that the Obama Administration and Congress will include Expanded Learning Time-type initiatives within the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and will continue to support provisions like Title I School Improvement that can be used to expand learning time. Another Congressional proposal, Senator Kennedy's TIME Act, which will be reintroduced in Congress in 2009, would provide matching grants to up to 10 states to replicate the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative. As states continue to face challenging economic times, a strategy to leverage federal funds to support state Expanded Learning Time Initiatives could result in the school transformations necessary to provide children in need an education that prepares them for success in higher education and the workforce.

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Endnotes

¹ D. Farbman & C. Kaplan, "[Time for a change: The promise of extended-time schools for promoting student achievement](#)." (Boston, MA: Massachusetts 2020, 2005).

² [Listening to Experts: What Massachusetts teachers are saying about time and learning and the Expanded Learning Time Initiative](#). (Boston, MA: Massachusetts 2020, May 2009), Massachusetts Teachers Association, American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts and National Center on Time & Learning.

³ Farbman & Kaplan (2005). Marguerite Roza & Karen Hawley Miles, [Taking Stock of the Fiscal Cost of Expanding Learning Time](#) (Center for American Progress, July 21, 2008)

⁴)Information derived from calculations by Education Commission of the States using data from the National Education Association's *Rankings & Estimates* November, 2008 publication.

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