TIME WELL SPENT

Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools

NATIONAL CENTER ON TIME & LEARNING

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Executive Summary

How can we close the achievement and opportunity gaps that plague our nation's public schools? What constellation of strategies will provide American students, particularly those living in poverty, with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st century world? How can we improve thousands of schools in high-poverty areas that are failing to prepare enough of their students for long-term success? More and more, today's education leaders and policymakers are grappling with these compelling challenges and looking toward expanded learning time for solutions.

Across the country, momentum is growing for schools to move beyond the traditional calendar of 180 six-and-a-half-hour days. Initially, these efforts were found primarily within the charter school movement, such as the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) network, which made expanded time a core element of its school design model, and among a small number of pioneering district schools that managed to expand learning time through the work of innovative leaders. Then, in 2010, the federal guidelines for the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program were revamped to focus on four models designed to turn around the nation's lowest performing schools. Two of the school models—"transformation" and "turnaround"—require that schools increase learning time for their students. With an initial infusion of $3.5 billion, as many as 850 schools, serving 500,000 students, have begun implementing these new models. And, although limited information exists, as yet, about how they have been implemented, the guidelines will continue to stimulate further experimentation with expanded learning time in schools and districts nationwide.

Today, there are at least 1,000 schools across the U.S. offering an expanded schedule, according to a 2010-2011 survey conducted by the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL). As interest in expanded learning time grows across the country, so, too, does a corresponding concern for how schools can ensure that adding time truly translates into a better education for every student. Clearly, more time in school does not guarantee improved learning outcomes for every individual child or even for students in the aggregate. As with any initiative or change effort, the quality of implementation matters.

Consequently, a new question is emerging for the field: How can schools maximize the great potential of expanded time and make the most effective possible use of this important resource?

Fortunately, we can learn from the dozens of outstanding expanded-time schools across the nation that are offering students a rigorous and well-rounded education and achieving impressive academic outcomes. Some of these schools belong to growing networks of charter schools, and others are the result of single site innovation in districts. These schools are demonstrating that with more time, strong leaders and teachers, and well-designed educational programs, schools can close the achievement and opportunity gaps for poor students.

To unlock the secrets of such success, NCTL chose to explore time use at some of the nation's highest-performing, expanded-time schools that serve high-poverty students. Our primary goal for this study is to advance understanding of the ways high-performing, expanded-time schools use additional time. Through interviews and site visits, we have documented and analyzed how schools allocate their time, and, more significantly, the specific practices which ensure that expanded school time is used productively and well.

Between January and June, 2011, NCTL identified 30 academically high-performing schools with longer school days and years, and then we studied how these schools have capitalized on more learning time to yield impressive student outcomes. (See Table 1 on page 12 for data on each of the 30 schools.) Schools selected for the study share the following characteristics: They offer significantly more time than do surrounding schools in their districts (at least an hour more per day or at least 10 more days per year); they serve a large percentage of low-income students (greater than 60 percent of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch); and these schools consistently demonstrate higher proficiency rates (at least 5 percentage points higher on state standardized tests for math or English language arts), with 18 of the 30 schools outperforming district averages in ELA and/or math by 20 percent or more. (See Appendix for more information on methodology and rationale for selecting schools.)

This report identifies a set of eight powerful practices of these successful, expanded-time schools. Our selection of these eight practices was informed not just by our observations and discussions with these schools, but also by more than six years of work with schools in the process of planning and implementing an expansion of their school calendar. NCTL's work with more than 100 schools planning to convert to expanded-time schedules—and our on-going work over five years with 30 schools that have completed such conversions—has afforded us the opportunity to examine significant differences in the implementation decisions schools make in expanding the school calendar and to better appreciate how these decisions affect the overall impact of the additional time. Interviews and visits to the high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study confirmed many of the lessons we have learned, provided some new insights, and deepened the nuances of our understanding about what it means to expand learning time effectively.

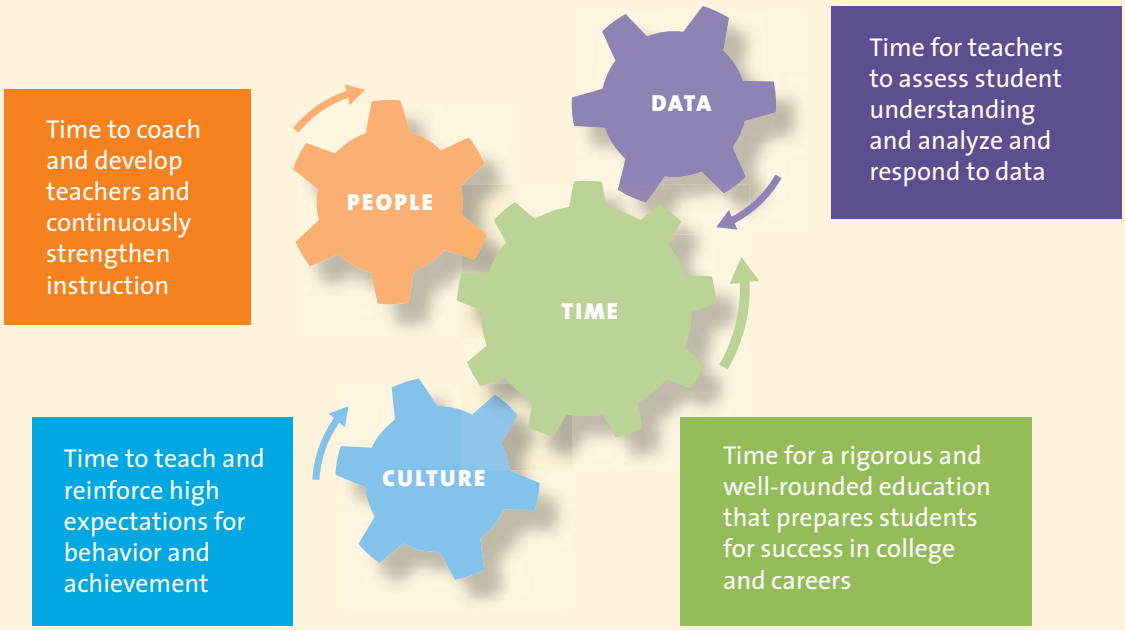
The Role of Time

The educators at the schools profiled in this study believe that more time is fundamental to providing a high-quality, rigorous, and well-rounded education that prepares students for success. More time allows schools to offer a challenging academic program, while still providing individualized academic supports that address the specific skill and knowledge gaps that can impede students' progress. With more time, schools can engage teachers in the significant work of analyzing student data, strategizing on common instructional practices, and honing their skills in the classroom. More time also allows schools to focus not just on the "tested subjects" of English and math, but also to provide a deep and engaging education in the sciences, humanities, social studies, and the arts. More time affords opportunities to expose students to the world outside their schools and communities, to build new skills and interests that they will pursue throughout their lives, and to offer activities that build a strong school culture—one that values and supports learning. Finally, more time allows schools, particularly high schools, to effectively prepare students who may be the first in their families to attend college, for future academic and professional success.

It should be noted that schools do not necessarily have to offer more time to implement any one of the eight practices described in this report. Past studies of high-performing schools that don't offer more time often have pointed to some of these very same practices as crucial reasons schools succeed. Further, more time is not the only reform needed for struggling schools; expanded time acts as a catalyst, or accelerator, to a series of other reforms as well. Indeed, it is this interaction of more time with other sound practices that leads to meaningful impact. Through NCTL's considerable experience on the ground, along with our observations for this study and other research, we have developed a four-factor model for effective school improvement involving expanded learning time. In this model, the power of time is synergized by productive investments in human capital—involving the development of outstanding leaders and teachers, the effective application of data, and the formation of a constructive school culture focused on high expectations and mutual accountability. Together, these four factors become vital, interactive companions in each successful school improvement. Time reform, people, data, and culture, in other words, comprise four interlocking gears for improving schools.

As depicted in the figure below, expanding learning time can have a *mutually* catalyzing and supporting effect with the three other reform gears. In this diagram, the gear labeled *People* refers to a wide range of efforts to develop or hire talented school leaders and highly effective teachers. While not all people reforms require additional time, schools in this study demonstrate how their work to improve teacher effectiveness relies on additional time for teachers.

Four Interlocking Gears of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools

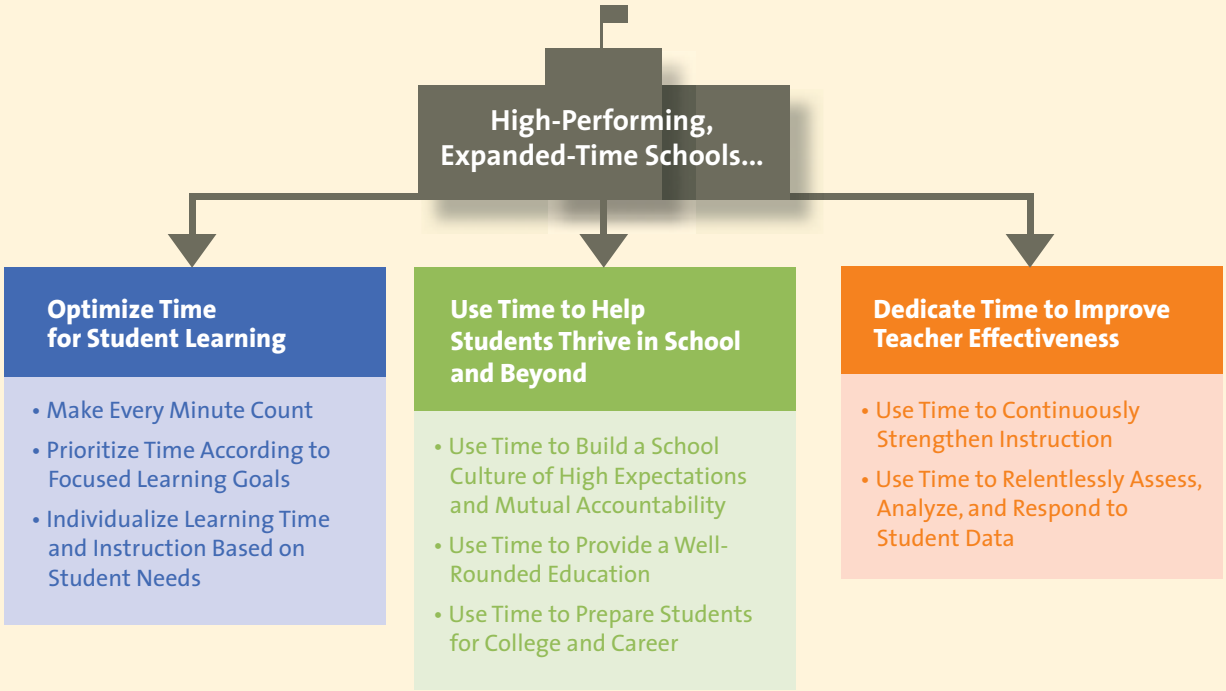


The corollary is that strong teachers and leaders use time well—that is, the two gears work together. The gear labeled *Data* refers to the many facets of improving the collection and use of data in schools. While developing excellent data systems does not require an expanded school schedule, to make full use of these systems, schools do need more time to conduct assessments, analyze, and respond to data. Again, reciprocally, the deft use of this data renders learning time more effective, because it guides investing instructional time exactly where individual students need it most. Finally, to establish a positive school *Culture*, schools do not necessarily need to expand learning time, but additional time can allow schools to offer a range of activities that build school spirit, teach shared values, and set and reinforce high expectations for behavior and achievement. This positive school culture also helps turn the gears by making the time for learning more productive.

All four gears in this diagram are fundamental to successful school reform. While the gear of *Time* helps turn the other three gears, in the absence of the others, this gear will spin unproductively. In that event, more time will have only limited impact on student learning.

The teachers and administrators at the schools profiled in this study will explain that while time alone is not enough, they believe more time, well spent, is an absolutely essential factor in the success of their school. The purpose of this report is to delve more deeply into what it means to use time well, drawing on some of the nation's most successful schools as laboratories for learning.

Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools



Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools

None of the eight practices described in this report are new ideas. Topics such as using data to drive instruction, building a positive school culture, and preparing students for college and career success are recurring themes among education leaders, reformers, researchers, and policymakers. What this study is among the first to explore is the unique, empowering relationship between expanded time and some of these significant school improvement strategies.

The eight practices highlighted in this report, which attempt to unpack this relationship, can be grouped into three categories. **The first three practices** describe a fundamental approach to ***optimizing time for student learning*** that seems foundational to these schools' success. High-performing, expanded-time schools consider time a precious resource; hence, they disburse it sparingly and invest it carefully, based on focused learning goals and individual student needs.

The second category of practices includes our observations about how these effective schools use time to support student success more broadly than just by offering intense and rigorous academic instruction. **Practices four through six** describe how schools in this study use time to broaden educational opportunities for students and provide an educational experience and school climate that ***help students thrive in school and beyond***. While most of the schools expand time for core academic instruction, and these academic classes take precedence in student schedules, the expanded day or year also affords schools the opportunity to invest in additional types of learning and student development.

The third set of practices describes how high-performing, expanded-time schools ***dedicate time for teachers to improve their teaching***. Policymakers and education leaders who advocate for expanded learning time are often most focused on the need for additional time for students and often overlook the value of an expanded schedule for teachers' development. **Practices seven and eight** describe how high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study use an expanded school schedule to improve teacher effectiveness.

I. OPTIMIZING TIME FOR STUDENT LEARNING

High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools:

1. Make Every Minute Count

Administrators and teachers at these high-performing schools are single-minded in their commitment to maximizing and optimizing learning time for both students and teachers.

Even with more time overall, every minute is deeply valued and the whole schedule is designed and re-designed to best meet needs and priorities. Lesson plans are carefully crafted to make class time highly productive. Learning kicks in from the moment class starts and the pace is energetic until class ends. Teacher meetings are well-planned and focused. Schedules and procedures are developed and routinely modified to eliminate wasted time and disruption from activities such as locker breaks, transitions, arrivals, and dismissals. Attendance and participation are closely monitored because students cannot learn when they are not in school or not engaged. We have placed *make every minute count* first in our list of practices, not to suggest that it is more important than the others, but because these schools have taught us the need to maintain a sense of urgency, messaging to all members of the school community that there is no time to waste, even as learning time expands.

2. Prioritize Time According to Focused Learning Goals

School leaders at these high-performing, expanded-time schools recognize that they must tightly align how they allocate their school time relative to their core goals. For most of the schools in this study, eliminating the academic achievement gap is the top priority. So, rather than filling their lengthened schedule with new initiatives and programs that could distract students and faculty from this aim, these schools are using the expanded time to offer their students more opportunity to receive rigorous academic instruction. Furthermore, class time at these schools is highly focused, with teachers planning their lessons based on clear objectives for their students' learning. Often, teachers "backward-map" lessons based on explicit goals for skills students should master by the end of the class, unit, semester, and/or year. Teachers at these successful, expanded-time schools use student data to develop and guide their focus for group instruction and to tailor their teaching to the needs of each individual student. When the data show that students need more time to achieve mastery in a specific area, in response, the educators will structure student schedules to afford more class time, or create opportunities for small group instruction or individual tutoring sessions, in response. This same focused and deliberate planning and prioritization of learning time occurs when these schools set goals for student development that extend beyond academic achievement—such as excellence in the arts, career readiness, or character education. In every setting, the expanded time is invested, and trade-offs are made, in accordance with a clear set of priorities that characterize and distinguish the school.

3. Individualize Learning Time and Instruction Based on Student Needs

Increasingly, education leaders are realizing that a one-size-fits-all approach to education is inadequate to help all students achieve at high levels. Students, particularly high-poverty students, come to school with diverse educational backgrounds and histories. Rather than trying to fit student learning into a preconceived and uniform schedule, highly successful schools mold academic instruction and learning time to fit the unique needs of the students they serve. Instruction is not

limited to core class periods. Students requiring extra support participate in specially designed intervention classes, review sessions, or one-on-one tutoring. And whether during the expanded day, or after school, or on weekends, the amount of learning time, content of the instruction, group size, and expertise of the instructor are tailored to these students' specific skills and knowledge gaps. This type of double, and sometimes triple and beyond dosing—along with efforts to constantly adjust instruction to target specific needs—means that students are receiving a far more personalized education than is customary at conventional schools. And personalization of learning time is foundational to the success of an expanded-time school.

II. HELPING STUDENTS THRIVE IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools:

4. Use Time to Build a School Culture of High Expectations and Mutual Accountability

School culture is an intangible concept, and one that is hard to measure, yet education leaders and reformers are deeply aware of its importance. The teachers and administrators we interviewed for this study attribute their school's success, in large part, to a positive culture that emphasizes high expectations for student behavior and achievement and that teaches students the value of hard work and self-discipline. Adults and students alike are accountable for results and students, teachers, parents, and school leaders all work together to achieve success. Some schools use the term "no excuses" to characterize this particular ethos where the only acceptable response to failures and setbacks is for everyone to work harder and smarter. To build and continuously reinforce this positive culture, these educators invest substantial time and energy on routines and activities—such as student orientations and advisory programs that teach school values, community meetings that celebrate student success, and incentive systems that hold students accountable for their actions.

5. Use Time to Provide a Well-Rounded Education

Many of the high-performing, expanded-time schools in this report place a premium on providing a broad array of learning opportunities in such areas as the arts, foreign languages, hands-on science, business, community service, and leadership. Administrators and staff in these schools view a good education as going beyond high skills in literacy and numeracy to include a much broader range of subjects, in addition to the tested ones, and a wider variety of experiences and activities than just academic classes. While not a universal practice among the schools in this study, many leverage an expanded schedule to include time for such classes and activities, which expose students to new skills and interests, help make learning more relevant, and aim to deepen

students' engagement in school. In fact, some schools make time not just to expose students to new skills but also to help them build mastery in particular extracurricular areas.

6. Use Time to Prepare Students for College and Career

The high-performing schools in this study invest time in a range of programs geared toward preparing their students for success after high school graduation. Schools with large populations of students who will be the first in their families to attend college spend time building their students' understanding of the value of a college education; supporting them through the college selection, application, and admission processes; and preparing them for the type of independent learning they will experience in college settings. While this practice was observed most fully at high schools, some elementary and middle schools in our study begin even earlier to instill in students an appreciation of the importance of attending college. Though college acceptance is the primary goal for most of these schools, some also focus on familiarizing students with career opportunities and helping their students to build the skills they will need to succeed in the work environment.

III. DEDICATING TIME TO IMPROVE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools:

7. Use Time to Continuously Strengthen Instruction

Through added professional development and planning days, or extra preparation and planning periods, or simply additional time to observe other classes or meet with instructional coaches, successful schools are using an expanded schedule to build a cadre of excellent teachers. At these high-performing schools, teachers spend substantial amounts of time working with instructional coaches, who often also serve as mentors, and with colleagues to engage in thoughtful lesson-planning that takes into consideration good teaching practices and clear objectives for student learning. Teachers also spend time in classroom observations, meetings with their coaches, and feedback sessions aimed at improving and refining their skills in the classroom.

8. Use Time to Relentlessly Assess, Analyze, and Respond to Student Data

The importance of using data to inform instruction has been well documented, and districts and schools across the country are working to improve their capacities to collect and analyze student data.[1] However, using data effectively takes time because the data must not only be collected (through student testing), but also processed, analyzed, and applied in practice. Schools in this study invest significant time assessing students, engaging teachers in analyzing the data, and then using the analyses to improve instruction and identify students who need specific additional support. This process creates a continuous improvement loop that allows schools to provide excellent instruction driven by student needs. The loop of assessment, analysis, improvement, and differentiation, followed again by assessment, continues until every student achieves mastery. In fact, many schools take this process one step further, using the data to constantly reshape programs and schedules to better support student learning.

It is worth noting that every school examined in this study does not place equal emphasis on all eight practices. For example, some schools prioritize data analysis but are somewhat less focused on school culture-building. In fact, schools will frequently face choices in trying to implement all of the practices well, because even with a longer school day or year there is not always enough time to do everything fully. Schools may need to choose, for instance, between focusing time and attention on individualized academic supports and offering substantial amounts of time for enriching extracurricular activities.

At the same time, there can be dynamic synergies among the eight practices. To individualize instruction and provide academic supports tailored to student needs, for instance, a school must excel at using data to identify the standards that require review or re-teaching. Similarly, some schools create appealing enrichment classes tied to specific academic priorities—such as forensics, robotics, or geometry through art—with a dual aim of bolstering learning in a focus area and engaging students through fun, hands-on learning. Indeed, our observations suggest that the schools with the strongest student outcomes tend to integrate multiple powerful practices into a single coherent school design.

A Note on Reading This Report

Time Well Spent: Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools was developed to share the lessons we have learned that illuminate effective approaches to expanding learning time with a wide range of audiences—including education leaders and policymakers, school administrators and teachers, and consultants and representatives of partner organizations that work directly with schools. These lessons also may prove useful, even valuable, to anyone else who is curious about how successful, expanded-time schools serving high-poverty students use time well. Each of the eight practices is explored in depth in its own section, and each section includes examples of the practice in action at particular schools. Examples are provided from elementary, middle, and high schools for most of the eight practices. (Practice Six, which focuses on college and career preparation, is explored exclusively at the high school level.) Wherever possible, we have tried to provide a balance of examples from charter and district expanded-time schools, although there tend to be more charter school examples because more charter than district schools met our study criteria.

Our goal is to encourage all school leaders and educators reading this report to look beyond some of the differences between their school and the schools profiled here to discover significant commonalities. While acknowledging disparities in school size, operating structure, geographic location, or grade level, we believe that educators can still find much that can be learned from the experiences of other schools. Although some distinctions among schools may prove substantive in the end, we hope that readers will be able to focus on the common opportunities, challenges, and decisions all schools face regarding how to allocate and leverage time.

Within each practice, we have identified three ***Keys to Success***—implementation practices that help to ensure that the additional time is well-used and achieves its intended goals. These strategies— totaling 24 in all—are intended to provide a blueprint for schools considering how to improve their efforts in the eight practice areas and to reap the full potential of expanded learning time. (See Table 2, on page 14, for a full list of the 24 *Keys to Success*.) Finally, an *Appendix* details the methodology NCTL used to identify the schools included in this study and summarizes the information we collected about the schools from interviews, student and teacher schedules, and other data.

Table 1: High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools

School Name	Location	Grades	School Type	Students	% Low Income	Hours/Year
Achievement First Crown Heights Middle School	Brooklyn, NY	5 – 8	Charter	296	72%	1664
Amistad Academy Middle School	New Haven, CT	5 – 8	Charter	295	77%	1571
An Achievable Dream High School	Newport News, VA	9 – 12	District	188	83%	1680
Arthur Ashe Charter School	New Orleans, LA	K – 8	Charter	322	92%	1546
Aspire Port City Academy	Stockton, CA	K – 5	Charter	405	82%	1224
Boston Arts Academy	Boston, MA	9 – 12	District	384	62%	1398
Brooklyn Generation School	Brooklyn, NY	9 – 12	District	320	81%	1303
Clarence Edwards Middle School	Boston, MA	6 – 8	District	496	87%	1544
Excel Academy Charter School	Boston, MA	5 – 8	Charter	212	72%	1459
Frank M. Silvia Elementary	Fall River, MA	PK – 5	District	637	66%	1471
Golder College Prep	Chicago, IL	9 – 12	Charter	540	88%	1303
Griffith Elementary School	Phoenix, AZ	K – 6	District	619	85%	1320
IDEA College Preparatory Donna	Donna, TX	6 – 12	Charter	810	86%	1416
Jacob Hiatt Magnet School	Worcester, MA	PK – 6	District	456	71%	1395
Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy	Dallas, TX	9 – 11	District	300	81%	1400
KIPP Heartwood Academy	San Jose, CA	5 – 8	Charter	390	82%	1656
KIPP Houston High School	Houston, TX	9 – 12	Charter	448	88%	1628
KIPP SHINE Prep	Houston, TX	PK – 4	Charter	801	96%	1679
Mary D. Coghill Elementary School	New Orleans, LA	PK – 8	District	584	92%	1408
Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus	Philadelphia, PA	7 – 12	Charter	690	91%	1384
Mastery Charter Schools Thomas Campus	Philadelphia, PA	7 – 12	Charter	587	68%	1297
MATCH Charter Public High School	Boston, MA	9 – 12	Charter	228	77%	1277
Matthew J. Kuss Middle	Fall River, MA	6 – 8	District	650	84%	1507
North Star Academy	Newark, NJ	9 – 12	Charter	204	76%	1509
Robert Treat Academy	Newark, NJ	K – 8	Charter	525	62%	1421
Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary	San Jose, CA	K – 5	Charter	500	91%	1368
Roxbury Preparatory Charter School	Boston, MA	6 – 8	Charter	258	74%	1539
Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School	Brooklyn, NY	5 – 8	Charter	248	83%	1549
Woodland Hills Academy	Turtle Creek, PA	K – 7	District	300	64%	1463
YES Prep North Central	Houston, TX	6 – 12	Charter	758	81%	1645

Table 2: Eight Powerful Practices and Keys to Success

OPTIMIZE TIME FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Practice	3 Keys to Success
1. Make Every Minute Count	• Plan lessons to maximize time on task and student engagement • Minimize non-instructional time • Emphasize attendance
2. Prioritize Time According to Focused Learning Goals	• Use data to identify priorities and goals • Keep the focus on the goals • Monitor progress towards goals
3. Individualize Learning Time and Instruction Based on Student Needs	• Train teachers to leverage additional time for individualized instruction • Use data to select, group, and re-group students for support • Integrate and align academic supports to core instruction

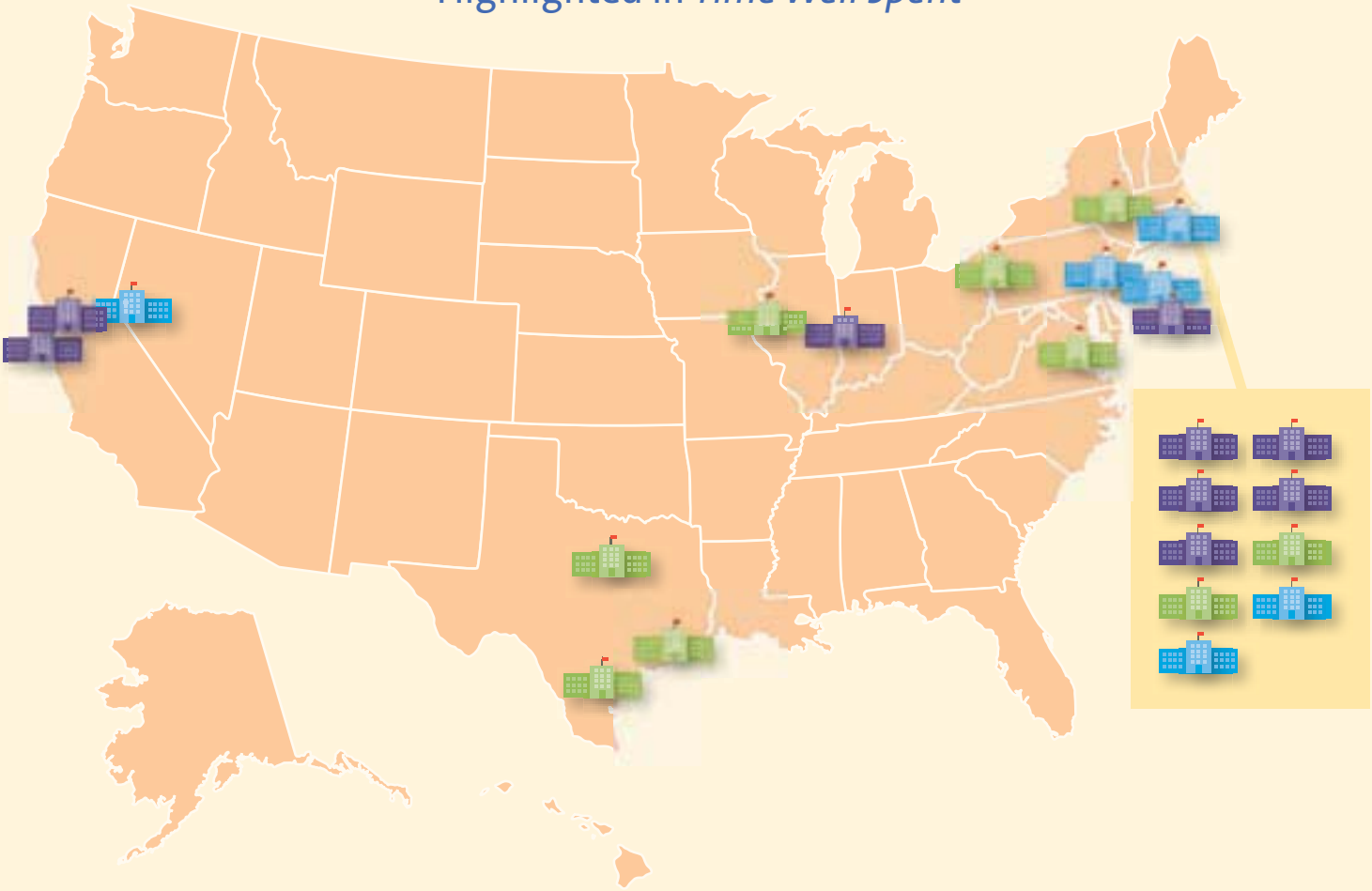
USE TIME TO HELP STUDENTS THRIVE IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Practice	3 Keys to Success
4. Use Time to Build a School Culture of High Expectations and Mutual Accountability	• Identify and consistently reinforce a small set of core values that are easy to remember • Train and support staff in setting and reinforcing expectations • Communicate expectations to parents
5. Use Time to Provide a Well-Rounded Education	• Respond to student interests • Start with exposure and offer opportunities for specialization and mastery • Create partnerships that bring in outside expertise and leverage the skills and expertise of teachers
6. Use Time to Prepare Students for College and Career	• Partner with colleges, businesses, and community organizations • Build a school culture committed to college completion • Support students who will be first-generation college students

DEDICATE TIME TO IMPROVE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Practice	3 Keys to Success
7. Use Time to Continuously Strengthen Instruction	• Provide teachers with frequent feedback and coaching • Focus on a small set of improvement goals • Create a culture that values feedback and continuous improvement
8. Use Time to Relentlessly Assess, Analyze, and Respond to Student Data	• Build school-wide commitment to data use • Provide teachers with tools that simplify real-time data analysis • Create protocols that support teachers in planning around data use

High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools Highlighted in *Time Well Spent*



OPTIMIZE TIME FOR STUDENT LEARNING

- Aspire Port City Academy (Stockton, CA)
- Clarence Edwards Middle School (Boston, MA)
- Excel Academy Charter School (Boston, MA)
- Frank M. Silvia Elementary School (Fall River, MA)
- Jacob Hiatt Magnet School (Worcester, MA)
- Golder College Prep (Chicago, IL)
- North Star Academy (Newark, NJ)
- Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary (San Jose, CA)
- Roxbury Preparatory Charter School (Boston, MA)

USE TIME TO HELP STUDENTS THRIVE IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

- An Achievable Dream High School (Newport News, VA)
- Brooklyn Generation School (Brooklyn, NY)
- Excel Academy Charter School (Boston, MA)
- IDEA College Preparatory Donna (Donna, TX)
- KIPP SHINE Prep (Houston, TX)
- Matthew J. Kuss Middle School (Fall River, MA)
- Golder College Prep (Chicago, IL)
- Woodland Hills Academy (Turtle Creek, PA)

DEDICATE TIME TO IMPROVE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

- Amistad Academy Middle School (New Haven, CT)
- Aspire Port City Academy (Stockton, CA)
- Jacob Hiatt Magnet School (Worcester, MA)
- Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus (Philadelphia, PA)
- Matthew J. Kuss Middle School (Fall River, MA)
- North Star Academy (Newark, NJ)

1

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

Make Every Minute Count

It's no coincidence that educators at high-performing, expanded-time schools are extremely vigilant about how they use time. At successful schools, an expanded-school schedule does not mean a slower pace or a more relaxed approach to time management: High-performing schools make every minute count. A sign in the front of one classroom at Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, reads: "We have 90,000 minutes this year; make each one count." The sense that learning time is a precious and scarce resource is pervasive and palpably felt across most of the schools in this study. "Even with more time than other schools," says Deb Shifrine, school leader at KIPP SHINE Prep, in Houston, Texas, "teachers still feel like we don't have enough of it."

In our work with schools across the country, NCTL has found that, too often, schools seek to expand learning time without ensuring that they are optimizing the time they already have. To address this issue, NCTL created a time analysis tool that schools can employ to assess how time is being currently used in their school day. When schools have utilized this tool and staff members discover how much instructional time is lost each day, many become more concerned to realize that these daily minutes lost fairly quickly add up to many hours lost each month, which then total to entire days lost throughout the year.

In high-poverty schools, where students frequently enter below grade level in multiple subjects, the need to maximize learning time is particularly pressing. Recognizing that time, even when expanded, is a scarce resource not to be squandered, the schools profiled in this study strategically account for every minute each day. Three key strategies help these schools to maximize learning time:

"We have 90,000 minutes this year; make each one count."

Sign on bulletin board at
Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus

Plan Lessons to Maximize Time on Task and Student Engagement

In excellent classrooms, students are deeply engaged in the activity of learning. Their engagement is palpable in the raised hands, nodding heads, quiet discussions with other students about the lesson topic, and concentration on specific tasks. High-performing, expanded-time schools work to maximize such moments of intense and productive learning by coaching teachers on how to plan and structure class time. The Aspire Schools network in California has created instructional guides for both ELA and math that detail specific strategies and curricula to use for lesson-planning. Using these guides, teachers at Aspire Port City Academy, in Stockton, California, plan lessons and activities in 15-minute increments. The short increments of time suggested by the network ensure that students are able to focus on the lesson and remain on-task for the entire class period. At North Star Academy in Newark, New Jersey, teachers plan with a similar goal of maximizing time on task. Each teacher plans lessons using a common template and lesson structure and reviews these lesson plans with an instructional coach. The lesson plans are highly specific, detailing exactly how much time will be spent on each activity. North Star Academy also provides training for their teachers in using strategies from Doug Lemov's book *Teach like a Champion*, which emphasizes a number of techniques teachers can use inside and outside the classroom to maximize time and student engagement. (See sidebar: "Maximizing Time on Task at North Star Academy") At Amistad Academy, instructional coaches support teachers in incorporating high engagement activities into their lesson plans and encourage teachers to insist on 100 percent of students on task.

Minimize Non-Instructional Time

Although non-instructional periods of time—such as classroom transitions, locker breaks, recess, lunch, homeroom, and dismissal—are inevitable within a typical school day, the schools in our study have found ways to minimize the amount of time devoted to these activities, or to add in components of instruction during them. At Aspire Port City Academy, teachers talk to students about current events as they transition to leave school each day. To reduce transition time between periods, Robert Treat Academy in Newark, New Jersey, places all grade level classrooms near one another in clusters. While students at most middle schools

travel to their different classes, students at Excel Academy Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts, as well as at Amistad Academy Middle School in New Haven, Connecticut, remain in their classrooms while teachers transition to different classrooms, reducing the number of people moving between periods of the school day. (See sidebar: "Minimizing Non-Instructional Time at Excel Academy Charter School")

Teachers at high-performing, expanded-time schools also strategically reduce the amount of non-instructional time, such as transitions, *within* their classes. Students at Aspire Port City (See sidebar: "Maximizing Instructional Time at Aspire Port City Academy") learn procedures and expectations for transitioning between activities in the beginning of the year. During these times, students have designated roles, and teachers use stopwatches to track the amount of time needed to begin a new activity. KIPP SHINE teachers, meanwhile, receive guidance from administrators on classroom management techniques that can minimize classroom interruptions.

Emphasize Attendance

The greatest loss of student learning time results from students arriving late, or missing school entirely. High-performing, expanded-time schools monitor student attendance frequently, and adopt protocols for rewarding strong attendance and responding to high absenteeism and tardiness. Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus, for example, has implemented a number of strategies to maintain an attendance rate above 95 percent for the year. Daniel Bell, Director of Operations at the school, says, "We have a parent truancy officer whom all the kids and families respect. Also, we make teachers responsible for calling parents when their students are not in the building, to check up on them. Those students who are chronically absent are assigned summer school, and we also call them in for an attendance meeting to devise an action plan." At the end of each quarter, Griffith Elementary School in Phoenix, Arizona, holds an awards ceremony to honor students with perfect attendance. Schools such as Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary and KIPP Heartwood Academy, both located in San Jose, California, also conduct home visits before the beginning of each year to communicate the importance of attendance to parents. "We do our home visits to get students and families excited about coming to school," Judy Tang, school leader at KIPP Heartwood, says. "We tell them that if they don't come, they can't participate in the fun we have each day and learn the skills they need to get into college."

95% Average attendance rate across 30 high-performing, expanded-time schools

Keys to Success

- Plan lessons to maximize time on task and student engagement
- Minimize non-instructional time
- Emphasize attendance

Maximizing Time on Task *at* North Star Academy / Newark, NJ

North Star Academy

Principal: Michael Mann

School schedule: 7:45am–3:45pm

Early release: 7:45am–2:15pm (Thurs.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 70 min/day and 11 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: 9–12

Number of students: 204

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 76%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 92% (+33%)

Math: 100% (+52%)

North Star Academy, in Newark, New Jersey, is possibly one of the most celebrated charter schools in the country. Visited by education leaders from around the nation and the subject of numerous articles and books about effective schools, North Star Academy is heralded for achieving a 100 percent college acceptance rate for its high-poverty student body and closing the achievement gap that plagues high-poverty cities like Newark. North Star was the first school founded by the charter management organization Uncommon Schools and is one of its flagship campuses.

One of the distinguishing features of North Star Academy is the school's emphasis on preserving instructional time, characterized by its laser-like focus on optimizing every minute of the school day. Instructional leaders place tremendous emphasis on lesson-planning, and school leaders have carefully considered how lessons should be structured to maximize time on task and student learning. Teachers at North Star follow a prescribed template for lesson-planning that includes six core components to every lesson.

Before the week begins, each teacher submits a week's worth of lesson plans following this template. These lesson plans specify exactly which activities will take place during each portion of the lesson, including what activities students will be doing at each interval. "We broke the lesson into two main components, Heart of the Lesson I and Heart of the Lesson II, because we realized 20-25 minutes was the optimal amount of time for students to focus on one main activity or topic. The parts of the lesson are usually connected, but there is some change in what is happening mid-way through," describes Mike Taubman, an English teacher.

While lesson-planning is a common practice across all schools, the process is rarely as structured as it is at North Star, and the plans are rarely so detailed. A typical plan for a 60-minute North Star lesson can be as long as three or four pages, with considerable detail on the questions teachers will ask, how they will probe for student understanding, and how they will differentiate instruction based on student needs. "We are really focused on making sure students are learning every minute of the day. The lesson plans really help us make sure our students get the quality instruction they need at all times," explains Michael Mann, Head of School. Confirming that teachers at North Star actually follow these plans, an observer at the school can walk into a classroom where a lesson is already underway, find the lesson plan posted at the back of the classroom, and figure out exactly what is happening at that moment of the class.

Teachers at North Star also develop classroom management plans that articulate the routines and procedures they will implement to ensure that time is used productively. These classroom management plans detail procedures for passing out and collecting papers, dividing into groups, entering and exiting the classroom, asking questions, and other procedures intended to create a classroom environment conducive to learning while also ensuring students remain on task. These plans are submitted at the start of the school year and reflect the school's forethought and planning to promote productive use of time.

Components of Lesson Plans at North Star

1. Do Now *(quick exercise to get students thinking)*
2. Oral Drill
   (review of past material, vocabulary, or important facts)
3. Heart of the Lesson I
4. Heart of the Lesson II
5. Assignment of Homework
6. Exit Ticket *(brief assessment to check for understanding)*

Maximizing Instructional Time *at* Aspire Port City Academy / Stockton, CA

Aspire Port City Academy

Principal: Shelby Scheideman

School schedule: 8:00am–3:20pm

Early release: 8:00am–12:40pm (Wed.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 60 min/day and 3 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: K–5

Number of students: 405

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 82%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the California State Test in 2010 *(difference compared to surrounding district)*

ELA: 67% (+33%)

Math: 84% (+40%)

The seventeen items that comprise Monday's third-grade schedule at Aspire Port City Academy (PCA), in Stockton, California, begin at the top of the white board and stretch all the way to the bottom, like a long grocery list. "9:00–9:15: Calendar Math"…"9:15–9:30: Roll and Write"… and "11:00–12:00: Writer's Workshop" are just a few of the items to be covered throughout the day. Each activity varies in length between 15 and 90 minutes. Students enter into the classroom, take out their homework, and begin to work on a set of problems posted on the board—all without any direction from the teacher. Even with an expanded schedule, teachers and administrators intentionally develop and teach protocols to minimize non-instructional time, and they plan for each instructional minute to maximize instructional time. By effectively leveraging instructional time in its expanded day, the school has produced impressive results: In 2010, Port City Academy scored 837 on California's academic performance index (API), which uses a scale of 200 to 1,000 to measure student growth using various state tests. California considers a score of 800 to indicate high levels of student growth.

As one of 30 Aspire schools across California, PCA's curricular and instructional strategies are developed by, and handed down from, the network. "The time allotted for each of the subjects comes from research-based instructional guidelines provided by Aspire," says Shelby Scheideman, principal of PCA. The school's instructional guidelines for language arts and math serve as the manuals for teaching short, 15-minute lessons, such as "Calendar Math" and "Roll and Write," which are incorporated into a teacher's lessons each day. "The Aspire instructional guidelines are a great resource for me to find different ways to teach language arts and math that hit on the different ways my students learn best," says Sokheap Heng, a fifth-grade teacher at PCA. For each strategy, the guidelines outline specific content resources, assessments, and frequency with which they should be taught. When these strategies are implemented in PCA classrooms, the result is a fast-paced, individualized learning environment. During a 90-minute reading lesson, students may receive whole class instruction for only 10 minutes; for the remaining 80 minutes, students are separated into three groups, based on needs, and the teacher spends time working with students in each small group. "The instructional guidelines call for a lot of mini-lessons, a lot of moving around in centers and workshops," continues Principal Scheideman. "We believe that this enables our teachers to make the most of their time in their class and target students who need the support." To smooth transitions between activities, Aspire teachers explicitly communicate directions, use a stopwatch to time students between activities, and devote time at the beginning of the school year to teach routines and assign student roles aimed to minimize transition time.

In addition to arming teachers with effective small group strategies, PCA also gives them time to identify student needs and plan strong lessons. Along with a daily prep period, PCA teachers meet each week with their grade-level peers. During these times, faculty review weekly and benchmark assessment data to identify students who need additional support, along with intervention staff to work further with them, and also to plan small-group lessons or assign after-school supports. "Having the time to look at the data and plan instruction that fits each student's needs is a big part of what we do," explains Scheideman. "It allows for each teacher's time with the students to be as meaningful as possible."

Minimizing Non-Instructional Time *at* Excel Academy Charter School / Boston, MA

Excel Academy Charter School

Principal: Komal Bhasin

School schedule: 7:30am–3:45pm

Early release: 7:30am–1:30pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 120 min/day and 7 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: 5–8

Number of students: 212

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 72%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 95% (+46%)

Math: 91% (+54%)

Nestled beside a pharmacy in one of Boston's poorer neighborhoods, Excel Academy may be easy to miss. But this school's success has caught the attention of educators in Boston and throughout Massachusetts. Despite a student body that is largely low-income, last year, for the third consecutive year, Excel Academy scored in the top 5 percent among middle schools across the state on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Entering students are typically several grade levels behind when they come into Excel; in 2010, after just one year at the school, 91 percent and 79 percent of these students scored proficient or above in ELA and math, respectively. An expanded school day—2 hours longer than surrounding Boston public schools—has allowed Excel to implement a rigorous curriculum, academic supports, engaging enrichment, and daily culture-building activities. To do so, educators at the school have intentionally planned out its time, designing routines and building expectations to maximize learning opportunities. "Although our school day is long," says Rebecca Korb, Excel's director of resource development, "we need every minute of it to give each of our students a well-rounded education."

Throughout its expanded school day, Excel educators have found additional time to fulfill their educational priorities—by limiting the amount of non-instructional time, such as classroom transitions and homework checks. Near the start of each day, students submit all homework during homeroom, enabling each core academic teacher to deliver more content, instead of collecting and checking homework during class. At the end of each period, teachers, instead of students, move to different classes—carrying their lesson materials in a cart to minimize the number of people transitioning, and consequently, the time lost to transitions. Rather than going to lockers after each period, students keep all class materials in the back of their homeroom and retrieve them at scheduled times during the day. Lunch, one of the most hectic periods of the day at many schools, is served in classrooms at Excel, eliminating travel time to and from a lunchroom.

Excel schedules a one-week summer orientation session for all students to learn, or re-learn, routines and procedures. By the start of each school year, every student knows to place his/her homework on their desk as their homeroom teacher quickly circulates to check for completion. Students understand the expectations for noise and behavior during class breaks, and they recognize that break times are to be used productively—to review academic content or engage in teacher-led, community-building activities. "The week of summer orientation lets us teach what we expect of our students from the first day they walk into class," says Korb. "By clearly articulating what we expect from them, even during periods where there isn't any direct instruction going on, we can transition back to those instructional activities more smoothly. Students also then learn that time is a precious commodity that we maximize to the fullest extent possible at Excel."

2

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

Prioritize Time According to Focused Learning Goals

With a longer school day or year, some schools can be tempted to create a wide range of new activities and initiatives for their students. With excellent intentions, teachers and administrators will envision tremendous possibilities for new programs and curricula and new uses for the additional time. However, despite the lure of new initiatives, high-performing, expanded-time schools display a singularity of purpose and an intensity of focus that are striking. The leaders at these schools consider the time they have with students their most valuable resource, and they invest it carefully based on clear goals for what they hope to accomplish.

For most of the schools in this study, rigorous academic instruction is the unmistakable priority; while many of these schools offer a wide range of exciting extracurricular opportunities, academics come first. The academic rigor can be palpably felt as fifth-graders debate and discuss literature or as high-school students work through advanced placement biology courses or prepare for a college-level calculus exam. Students often take not just one math class but two—reviewing, practicing, and applying math concepts until they show mastery. Further, the goal for students is not just proficiency on state exams. Teachers are working students hard to prepare them for success in top-performing high schools and colleges. At some schools, the curriculum and pace often mirrors that of honors or advanced track programs at some of the best suburban or private schools.

The emphasis on academics is clear in student schedules: Across the 30 schools studied, schools spend more than 28 hours—almost an entire week at schools with conventional schedules—just on academic instruction. This means time spent just on academic subjects at these expanded-time schools is almost equivalent to the amount of time students in conventional schools spend on academics *and* everything else—including homeroom, lunch, PE, transitions, etc. Additionally, at many of the schools in this study, some or all students stay after school for additional instruction, attend school on Saturdays, or participate in special summer academic programming. In all, as many as 25 of the 30 schools studied offer some sort of academic programming outside of regular school hours for some or all of their students. Further, students spend considerable time on homework. While homework policies vary from school to school and by grade level, on average, students at elementary schools in this study spend one hour on homework per night and middle and high school students spend two hours on homework per night. At some schools in this study, these figures are twice as high.

Moreover, the substantial time devoted to academic instruction is carefully planned and allocated based on clear goals for student achievement and an assessment of student needs. For example, rather than assigning all grade levels equivalent amounts of time on each subject—a scheduling convention in many middle and high schools—educators at Mastery Charter Schools Thomas Campus, in Philadelphia, designed their schedule by comparing their incoming students' skill deficits and knowledge gaps to the standards and content students would need to master to be successful in college. "Our students come in incredibly low in ELA and math," says Matt Troha, the school's principal. "For these students, we focus on math and reading, providing double blocks in earlier grades, so that by tenth grade, all the students should be caught up, and we can begin to get them ready for college."

Similarly, educators at Roxbury Preparatory Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts, have created an academic schedule now emulated at several other schools in this study. (See sidebar: "Curriculum Planning Based on Focused Learning Goals at Roxbury Prep") The schedule and the academic content of each Roxbury Prep class are based on a careful assessment of the skills and content students will need to succeed in a rigorous, college-preparatory high school. Throughout a three-week planning period during the summer, every Roxbury Prep teacher, alongside his/her department chair, builds a course guide and set of assessments based on very specific goals addressing areas they want students to master by the end of the year. This planning and goal-setting determines how class time is used.

Likewise, students at Achievement First Crown Heights in Brooklyn, New York, receive double blocks of both language arts and math each day. Wells Blanchard, the school leader, explains the precision with which these blocks are planned:

"When we make decisions about anything—whether it's scheduling, staffing, curriculum, or programming—we always ask ourselves, 'Is this helping our students achieve their goal?'"

Matt Troha,
Principal, Mastery Charter Schools Thomas Campus

"We like to have separate periods for reading and writing. Often times, if reading and writing are combined, one of the two is lost. In math, if the objective for the day is difficult, then the second math period is an extension of the first period. On other days, the double blocks of math allow us to cover more than one objective." Julie Kennedy, the school leader at Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School, also in Brooklyn, describes how the school has prioritized math instruction to both catch students up and even push them ahead: "We have 125 minutes of math every day and 85 on Wednesdays. That helps us cover more of the curriculum, and we finish the scope and sequence before the year is over, and go into next year's curriculum. Our eighth-grade students are learning a combination of eighth-grade and ninth-grade math."

Some schools, particularly schools converting to an expanded schedule rather than originating with a longer day and year, have found it particularly helpful to prioritize one particular instructional area as the focus of their redesign efforts. At Jacob Hiatt Magnet School in Worcester, Massachusetts, for example, faculty and administrators engaged in a collaborative effort to create a school-wide instructional focus. After looking at student data, they chose to focus on improving student's ability to read critically and answer questions in writing about what they read. The educators set very clear and explicit goals for improving student performance in this focus area. This school-wide instructional focus became the anchor of Hiatt's expanded learning time school design, which features a two-hour uninterrupted literacy block at all grade levels. Student learning time, as well as time for teacher professional development and collaboration, is aligned with this school-wide focus. "As an Expanded Learning Time School, we have the gift of additional time. The instructional focus work allowed us to make the extra time that we have that much more valuable, because we're able to look much more closely at student's strengths and weaknesses and zero in on exactly what students need," explains Mary Labuski, the assistant principal at Hiatt. (See sidebar: "School-wide Instructional Focus at Jacob Hiatt Magnet School")

A smaller number of schools in this study invest heavily in areas other than academics, however these schools are similarly goal-oriented and focused in their approaches. For example, Boston Arts Academy's mission is to provide a rigorous arts education alongside a rigorous academic education, and therefore the school devotes nearly 10 hours of instruction per week to arts classes. Similarly, Brooklyn Generation School's

mission includes exposing students to careers and the workplace. Students at the school spend as much as two months of the school year in "Intensives"—theme-based classes that teach students about specific career paths.

Rather than seeing the expanded schedule as an opportunity to relax efforts to plan for and structure classes, teachers and administrators at highly successful schools develop clear goals that drive how all learning time is used. We observed three specific strategies that help high-performing, expanded-time schools ensure that time for academic instruction remains rigorous and focused on clear goals for student achievement:

Use data to identify priorities and goals

To identify school-wide academic priorities, schools must first meticulously analyze their students' performance data. At Jacob Hiatt, for instance, teams of teachers, led by an instructional leadership team, pored over student data and narrowed in on one underlying skill gap—answering questions in writing about texts they have read—that then became their school-wide instructional focus. Team members realized that this particular skill gap was impacting their students' academic performance in all areas and was the most important matter for them to focus on collectively. Teachers at Frank M. Silvia Elementary School in Fall River, Massachusetts, engaged in a similar process and developed an instructional focus on improving reading comprehension and writing. (See sidebar: "Focusing Improvement Efforts at Frank M. Silvia Elementary School") At Mastery Thomas and Roxbury Prep, the student schedules are based on data that showed many of the students entering the school were several grade levels behind their peers.

Keep the focus on the goals

Unless goals are clearly and repeatedly communicated across an entire school, they will rarely take root and impact decision-making. Goal-oriented schools utilize hallway banners, data wall displays, community nights for parents, school assemblies, and teacher planning meetings to continuously communicate their goals to staff, students, and parents. At Hiatt, each class begins with students reciting the school-wide literacy goal, which is the instructional focus: "Jacob Hiatt Magnet School students know how to see it, read it, write it, say it, prove it. Give me five." Many schools included in this study adopt a common vocabulary in their classrooms to continually reinforce the school-wide goal of preparing students for college. At KIPP Heartwood, teachers in all grades and content areas remind students each day to "climb the mountain to college," and stress that "there are no shortcuts" to academic success.

Monitor progress toward goals

Monitoring student progress toward schoolwide goals helps educators adjust curriculum and programming throughout the year, and also reminds staff of the continual focus on these achievement goals. All Mastery Charter Schools schedule "data days" after each of the network's six yearly benchmark assessments. Data days allow teachers to analyze and plan around the assessment results while students are out of the building. For each teacher, Mastery's benchmark data reports also predict whether each student is making adequate progress throughout the year, based on an algorithm designed by the Mastery network. At Hiatt, during grade level team meetings, teachers monitor progress toward their goals for student literacy skills and open-response writing by discussing student work and assessment data.

Keys to Success

- Use data to identify priorities and goals
- Keep the focus on the goals
- Monitor progress toward goals

School-wide Instructional Focus *at* Jacob Hiatt Magnet School / Worcester, MA

Jacob Hiatt Magnet School

Principal: Patricia E. Gaudette

School schedule: 7:50am–3:35pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 80 min/day

Student Population

Grades served: PK–6

Number of students: 456

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 71%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 59% (+14%)

Math: 59% (+17%)

Two years after converting to an expanded-time school, leaders at Jacob Hiatt Magnet School in Worcester, Massachusetts, guided the entire school faculty through a collaborative process aimed at developing one school-wide instructional focus. The specific goal of the instructional focus work was to prioritize and direct the school's efforts to strengthen instruction and improve student performance. Rather than trying to improve everything at once, faculty members decided to come together around a very clear goal in one area, learning to work together to strengthen instruction and improve student achievement in a very targeted way.

Working with Focus on Results, an educational consulting group hired by the district to work with multiple schools, Hiatt's teachers and administrators analyzed student performance data to understand the key areas where students were showing particular weaknesses. Almost immediately, faculty recognized that students were scoring very poorly on open-response questions. These teachers and administrators also recognized that open-response writing and the skills associated with it (analyzing text, making claims, identifying evidence) cut across all subject areas and are fundamentals for academic success. For this reason, faculty members decided on a school-wide instructional focus on open-response writing and crafted the following instructional focus statement that is clearly posted throughout the school:

Working together to establish goals for student improvement in this area, the Hiatt educators created data displays for each classroom that would reflect how students were progressing. They also settled on three school-wide best practices for teaching open-response writing and have worked to ensure that all teachers implement these practices every day, in every classroom.

The current focus on writing drives how time and resources are deployed at Hiatt. Additional time was added to the daily schedule for literacy and writing, including a daily, two-hour, uninterrupted literacy block. Open-response writing is woven into other core subject areas—math, science, and social studies—so students understand that writing isn't just an isolated activity in English class, but is actually at the core of academic success. Even Hiatt specialty teachers (in art, music, PE, and technology), along with community partners, are familiar with the focus and best practices, so they can integrate a writing component into enrichment classes using these same teaching strategies. Hiatt's instructional leadership team also has organized teacher collaboration and professional development around the school-wide instructional focus and team members use the time to improve each teacher's ability to implement the identified school-wide practices. By establishing a school-wide focus, and using it to guide their new school day over the past several years, Hiatt has seen significant improvement in the quality of student writing across grade levels, as measured by school and district interim assessments and Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores.

Instructional Focus Statement

All Jacob Hiatt Magnet School students will show measurable growth in their ability to read and respond to open-response questions, using details and relevant information from all text for support. Teachers will implement writing strategies for open-response questions to support our instructional focus. Success will be measured by student performance on MCAS 4-point rubric and school performance-based writing.

Focusing Improvement Efforts *at* Frank M. Silvia Elementary School / Fall River, MA

Frank M. Silvia Elementary School

Principal: Denise Ward

School schedule: 7:30am–3:40pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 110 min/day

Student Population
Grades served: PK–5
Number of students: 637
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 66%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment system Test in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 58% (+23%)

Math: 58% (+25%)

In 2008, a year after becoming a Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time school, Frank M. Silvia Elementary School embarked upon a comprehensive instructional improvement effort. To lead this effort, the principal formed an instructional leadership team (ILT) and also formed a smaller data team devoted to the examination of school and student-level data.

As a first step in their work together, these teams led the Silvia faculty in a careful analysis of student results on teacher-developed assessments and the most recent Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Through this process, Silvia teachers and administrators realized that students needed to strengthen their reading comprehension skills, and so the faculty decided to adopt a school-wide instructional focus on improving students' reading comprehension across the curriculum.

Anchored by this clear, school-wide focus, these educators scheduled more time to teach valuable skills in this arena. The ILT and data group helped each grade-level team set student achievement goals in reading comprehension and also redesigned the professional development and planning time to support teachers in meeting these goals. To keep everyone "focused on the focus," the ILT worked with staff to post student data inside classrooms and created grade-level data boards in the school's more public spaces. The data displays became a daily reminder of the school's goals and allowed staff to quickly visualize the progress students were making toward attaining these aims. Further, to make certain that the additional time for reading comprehension would be used effectively, the ILT also identified a set of "School-wide Best Practices" and used the redesigned common planning and professional development meetings to help teachers master these practices.

Over the years, as the instructional focus became more infused into all aspects of their teacher development and classroom instruction, Silvia educators recognized that the assessment instruments used to determine student progress were inadequate. Consequently, they developed new reading comprehension assessments and rubrics to evaluate student work. As they employed these new assessments, Silvia teachers and administrators realized that students had improved in reading comprehension but were now struggling to demonstrate their skills in writing. During the 2011-2012 academic year, Silvia's leadership decided to expand the original school-wide focus also include helping students to communicate in writing and answer open-response questions. To support this broader school-wide instructional focus, school leaders divided the school's additional learning time into two separate periods: a literacy period focused on strengthening reading comprehension skills and a separate writing period focused on improving their ability to communicate their thoughts through writing.

Silvia has begun reaping the benefits of this focused approach to expanding learning time. Students at each grade level have shown marked improvement in the annual ELA MCAS since the instructional focus was implemented. In contrast, during this same period, proficiency rates have stagnated across other district elementary schools. Silvia's methods for teaching elementary school students how to competently and confidently answer open-response questions are now being adopted by all other elementary schools in the district.

Curriculum Planning Based on Focused Learning Goals *at* Roxbury Prep / Boston, MA

Roxbury Prep

Principal: Greg Woodward

School schedule: 7:30am–4:15pm

Early Release: 7:30am–1:25pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 145 min/day and 8 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: 6–8

Number of students: 258

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 74%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 77% (+26%)

Math: 69% (+33%)

Since the school's founding in 1992, Roxbury Preparatory Charter School's mission has been to prepare its middle school students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. Each year, the school sends nearly all of its students to highly selective private and public college preparatory high schools. Nearly 80 percent of Roxbury Prep's first four graduating classes are enrolled in, and graduates of, colleges and universities across the nation.

Recognizing the real-world challenges faced by many of their students—nearly three-quarters of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch, with many entering the school several grade levels behind in math and reading—Roxbury Prep's founders created an 8-hour-and-45-minute school day that provides a combination of rigorous academic instruction, engaging enrichment programs, and social and emotional development classes. The schedule and the academic content of Roxbury Prep classes have been carefully planned to ensure that every student graduates middle school, prepared for success in highly competitive high schools.

Each day, Roxbury Prep students receive four sections of literacy and math—two for each subject. "When we looked at what we wanted our students to learn in literacy," recounts Principal Greg Woodward, "we decided that there were really two skills involved: comprehension and composition. Rather than one class that attempts to do both, we separated them out." Math follows a similar structure—every day, students receive one period of math procedures and another period devoted to math problem-solving. "In order to know the steps to actually solve the problem and then apply those steps in the abstract, such as in word problems, we needed two distinct periods of math," says Woodward.

Over the years, Roxbury Prep's school leaders have honed in on a clear set of standards and expectations for each course at each grade level. "We don't have any textbooks," explains Woodward. "All our teachers create their own curricula." For three weeks each summer, every Roxbury Prep teacher and their curriculum chair identify content to teach throughout the school year, drawing from standards specified by the Massachusetts Department of Education, standards from other states, and curricula developed by previous teachers. During this three-week planning period, Roxbury Prep teachers determine when, and the amount of time needed, to teach each standard, and they create three assessments to be administered at the end of every trimester. Each set of standards and skills is then entered into what the school calls a "curriculum alignment template." "It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to be deciding what you're going to teach, or when you're going to teach it, as you progress through the year," says Woodward. "We want our students to know what they're going to need to master at the start of the year, and let them know that these are the skills that are going to prepare them for the road ahead."

Teachers use the curriculum alignment template to track student progress in mastering key standards. Once every two weeks, teachers review data to monitor the progress students have made, and every three weeks, student reports are sent home, including updates on student performance relative to the specific standards. Each trimester assessment—called a "comprehensive" at Roxbury Prep—is also aligned to the standards, so that teachers and students are able to track performance on specific standards throughout the year.

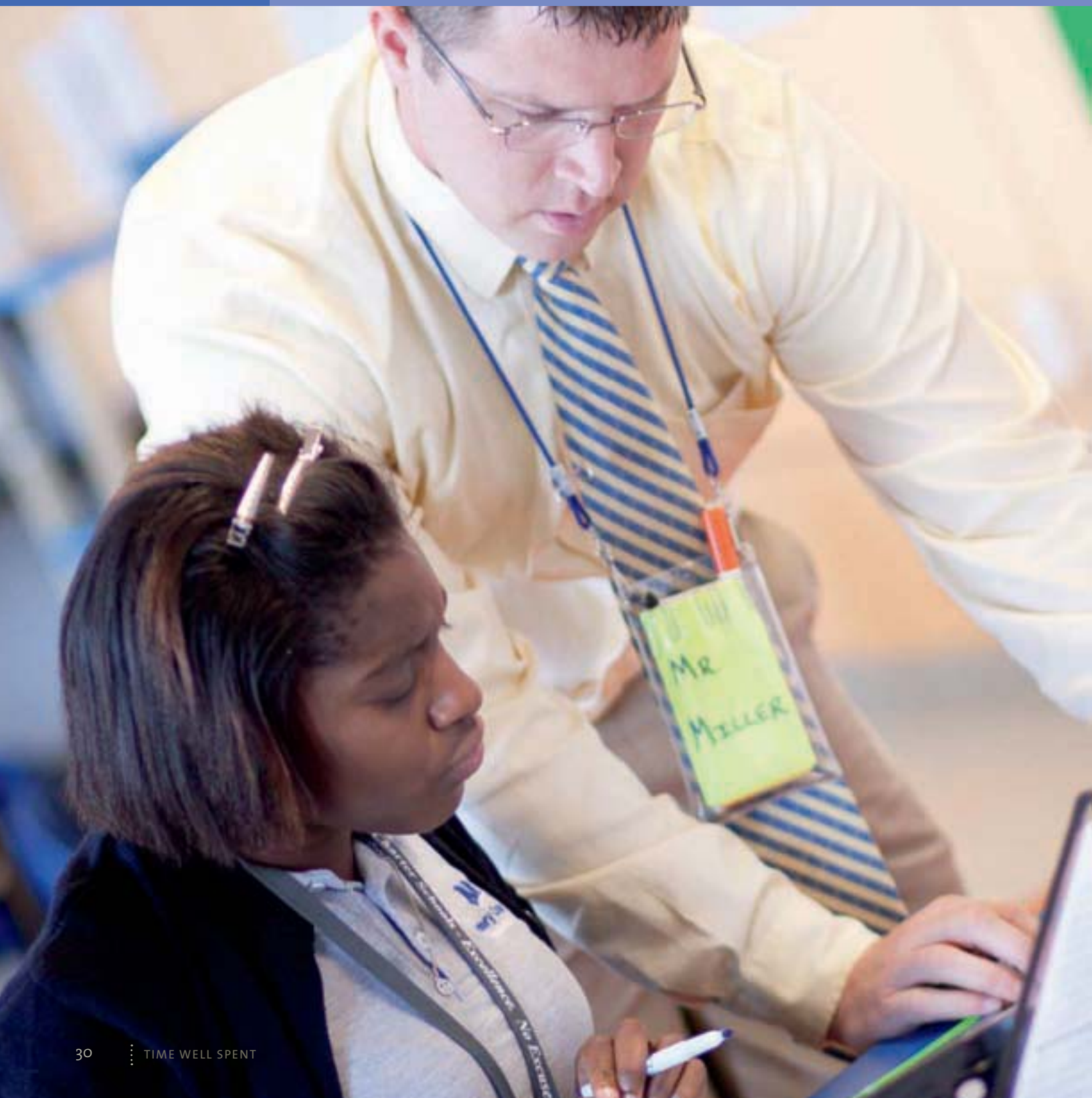
Teachers are expected to become specialists. For this reason, core academic teachers only teach one grade and subject, and literacy teachers only teach comprehension or literacy, and math teachers only teach procedures or problem solving. "By having each teacher teach only one set of content to four different classes each day," says Woodward, "they can focus solely on that lesson and plan their year-long curriculum for only one class in one grade."

Do New
Stations
Freshman Agenda
Do New
Ear Training
Stations
Advisory

3

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

Individualize Learning Time and Instruction Based on Student Needs



Arguably, one of the most significant challenges high-poverty schools face is the diverse array of academic skills and skill-deficits their students bring to the classroom. Schools can no longer rely on a one-size-fits-all model for educating their student populations that demonstrate below-grade-level reading and writing performances, varying levels of English proficiency, and learning disabilities. The teachers and administrators at the high-performing, expanded-time schools examined in this study recognize that in order to help all students achieve at enhanced levels, each student must have a schedule and an academic program which are tailored to address their individual needs. An expanded schedule is the linchpin to this individualized approach, allowing schools to offer double, and sometimes triple, doses of instruction depending on student skill levels and knowledge gaps. As depicted in the diagram on the next page, the resulting academic program appears like a layer cake, with all the students benefiting from one or two layers, and some students getting three or even four. To carry this analogy further, not only does the number of layers vary for each student, so does the content of each layer. Teachers are constantly adjusting what they teach, and how they teach it, to ensure that every student achieves mastery.

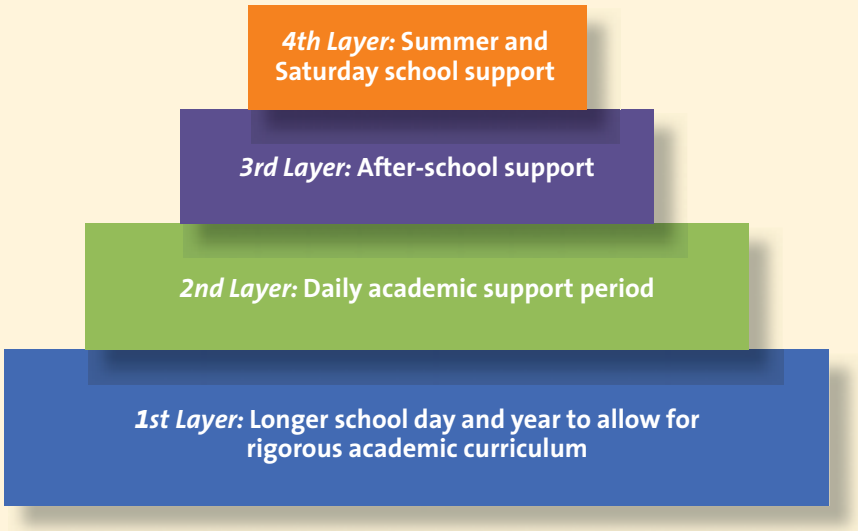
The first layer of instruction, which all students receive, is a rigorous, core academic curriculum. At many of the profiled schools, core classes are lengthened or offered in double blocks: Of the 30 schools studied, 21 schedule two periods of reading and/or math into their day. The lengthened or double periods allow teachers to cover more content, while they also afford teachers more opportunities to review or re-teach standards that students may not have completely understood initially. Many teachers use this time for targeted intervention. For example, Rocketship Mateo Sheedy, an elementary school with a large English-language-learner population in San Jose, California, schedules three and one half hours of English language arts (ELA) instruction each day. "Having a longer class period allows me to have more guided reading in homogeneous groupings, allowing me to work in a small group setting and really intervene in a targeted way," explains Jacklyn Vargas, a teacher at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy. (See sidebar: "Serving English Language Learners at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary") At KIPP Heartwood Academy, academic classes are 85 minutes long. "Because our class periods are longer," says a KIPP Heartwood administrator, "there's more time for independent practice, allowing teachers to circulate and target individual students to help them more."

In addition to a strong set of core academic classes at many of the schools profiled in this study, 20 of the 30 also offer a second layer of instruction in the form of a daily period of academic support. While all students might receive this additional block of academic instruction, student placement is usually determined according to individual academic strengths and weaknesses. Students needing particular math support are grouped together, for example, while others may be placed in a special reading group. Woodland Hills Academy in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, uses its extra 60 minutes per day to offer a daily, small-group intervention period. At Clarence Edwards Middle School in Boston, Massachusetts, all students are assigned to a one-hour "Academic League" based on academic strengths and weaknesses. (See sidebar: "Academic Leagues at Clarence Edwards Middle School")

Finally, beyond the longer class periods, double blocks, and additional academic support classes all students receive, many of the profiled schools offer a third, and even fourth, layer of academic instruction to targeted students. About two-thirds of the schools profiled provide additional individualized instruction after the already longer school day. For example, students at Golder College Prep, in Chicago, Illinois, receive daily homework help after school to help them catch-up with assignments and improve their grades. (See sidebar: "Individualized Supports and Safety Nets at Golder College Prep") Struggling readers at Excel Academy in Boston, Massachusetts attend a literacy workshop after school to improve reading comprehension and literacy skills. Overall, one third of the schools profiled in this report hold Saturday school for selected students, delivering reading and math instruction in smaller class sizes, and another third offer academic programming during vacation periods (e.g. summer and spring breaks) to target students who may benefit from additional individualized instruction.

While these examples demonstrate primarily, how schools individualize time for academics, this type of personalization of learning time can often carry over into how time is used during other parts of the day. At many schools, students choose from a variety of electives and activities, pursuing their individual interests. Students receive college and career counseling, shaped by their own specific interests and goals. Teachers and administrators work hard to get to know students and their families and to provide the unique set of academic, social, emotional, and extracurricular supports students need to thrive in school.

More Time to Individualize Instruction



Schools that have been successful in using additional time to individualize instruction employ the following three strategies:

Train teachers to leverage additional time for individualized instruction

Teachers across high-performing, expanded-time schools emphasize that they need to modify their approach to teaching to fully leverage the additional time. "Unless you plan carefully and make different use of the additional time, it's unlikely that a longer block of time is going to really help you meet your students' needs," according to Mary Labuski, the assistant principal at Jacob Hiatt Magnet School in Worcester, Massachusetts, where more time was added to the school day starting in 2006. Some schools offer specific training for teachers about how to leverage additional time for individualized instruction. Teachers at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy, for instance, are trained in delivering small-group, better-differentiated instruction during the expanded ELA time. Similarly, Aspire Port City Academy in Stockton, California, incorporates small group instruction throughout their classrooms as well. High-performing, expanded-time schools also staff academic support and intervention classes with highly qualified teachers and train them on the instructional practices that are most effective in teaching problem standards—in other words, the areas that are causing the most difficulty. Clarence Edwards Middle School in Boston specifically matches struggling students with the strongest teachers for its one-hour Academic League each student takes four times a week. Here, for example, the school identifies which teachers have been most effective in building student proficiency in reading, and then the school assigns struggling readers to these teachers.

Use data to select, group, and re-group students for support

To provide an individualized academic program, school staff must deeply understand each individual student's academic strengths and weaknesses, so that supports can be tailored and targeted to particular skill deficits. To understand these needs, teachers and administrators must become adept at gathering and analyzing data. Teachers at Aspire Port City Academy use weekly assessment data to identify content to be re-taught, and then they create student groupings for each lesson. For their academic support period—called "Power Hour"—KIPP SHINE Prep in Houston, Texas, employs benchmark and reading assessment data to group students each quarter. Rocketship Mateo Sheedy uses a quarterly reading assessment to assign students (typically those scoring in the bottom 20 percent) to a two-hour, after-school support session, provided by a tutor in a one-to-one setting. At most of the schools in this study, students move in and out of supports like these after-school tutoring sessions, depending on how they perform on interim assessments. Teachers at Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, use daily "exit tickets"—a diagnostic problem or question, based on the lesson topic, which students turn in as they leave the classroom—to gauge understanding of the day's lesson. The teachers then grade these exit tickets to determine which students should be asked to attend weekly office hours after school, where they will receive additional support.

Integrate and align academic supports to core instruction

High-performing, expanded-time schools align academic support periods to core academic classes. Schools make time for teachers to communicate about student needs, identify the strands and standards they need to review, and strategize about the most effective teaching strategies to employ. "Having more time is crucial to get each student to where they need to be," explains Amrita Sahni, the director of instruction at Clarence Edwards Middle School, "but we also need time to analyze data so that our supports can be meaningful for our students." At Edwards Middle School, teachers use five math and four ELA interim assessments, offered at key intervals throughout the year, to identify student weaknesses. Based on the number of students scoring proficient on different standards, these teachers will identify which standards to focus on in each Academic League. Periodic planning sessions are held for Edwards teachers to strategize about how to address these weaknesses. When a student is in a math Academic League, for example, taught by a teacher other than the student's regular math teacher, the two teachers make time to discuss the data from the interim assessments and their own classroom observations to enable them to develop a plan that will address the student's needs. As an additional benefit, this type of collaboration builds and strengthens a mindset among teachers that they are working to help all students in the school succeed, not just the ones assigned to their classes.

Keys to Success

- Train teachers to leverage additional time for individualized instruction
- Use data to select, group, and re-group students for support
- Integrate and align academic supports to core instruction

Serving English Language Learners *at* Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary / San Jose, CA

Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary

Principal: Maricela Guerrero

School schedule: 8:00am–4:00pm

Early release: 8:00am–2:00pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 90 min/day

Student Population

Grades served: K–5

Number of students: 500

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 91%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the California State Test in 2010 *(difference compared to surrounding district)*

ELA: 78% (+17%)

Math: 92% (+25%)

Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary (RMS), in San Jose, California, is one of five schools founded by Rocketship Education, a charter management organization that has been recognized across the country for effectively integrating technology into its longer school day. At RMS and the other Rocketship schools, adaptive software is used to supplement traditional classroom instruction, making it possible for students to receive truly individualized instruction.

Rocketship Mateo Sheedy's hybrid school platform combines traditional classroom teaching with tutors and technology to meet the needs of each student. This platform enables teachers to maximize classroom time for instruction, guided practice, and critical thinking exercises, while tutors and technology provide additional independent practice, assessment, and remediation/ acceleration. Moreover, the hybrid school model creates significant cost savings, which are then reinvested in programs and people.

At RMS, students receive instruction throughout four learning blocks, each lasting 1 hour and 40 minutes. The time allocations include two blocks of ELA, one block of math, and one block of Learning Lab. Such a schedule creates ample opportunities for teachers to differentiate instruction and ensure that each student is receiving the targeted support he/she needs. What's more, the longer learning blocks of an hour and 40 minutes each allow teachers to spend more time on guided practice and small group instruction—grouping students according to specific needs and spending more time with struggling students. Meanwhile, the Learning Lab utilizes technology to provide individualized ELA and math content to students and daily assessment data to teachers, allowing them to further target instruction to students' needs.

Led by non-certificated staff members, who split their time between coaching students using online learning programs and tutoring students in small groups, the Learning Lab period is broken up into three components: 30 minutes for PE/Health/Music/Art, which takes place in the lunch room or playground; 40 minutes of Reading Lab; and 30 minutes of Math Lab. (Both Reading and Math Labs take place in the computer lab, and up to four classes of students can occupy this space each period.) Students rotate between the three blocks. When in Reading Lab, students read short books and complete a five to ten question quiz to assess comprehension using an online program; students also spend time using an adaptive ELA program, such as Compass Learning Reading Odyssey. The books and assessments are all aligned to a Development Reading Assessment (DRA) score, providing teachers with daily updates on each student's reading performance. When in Math Lab, students use online content from various educational software providers (including DreamBox Learning, TenMarks, ST Math, and others) for independent math practice. Since many of these programs are adaptive in real-time, each student can progress at a pace that matches his or her specific learning needs. School-wide assessments are administered every eight weeks in both ELA and Math, enabling teachers to track student progress and provide targeted supports early on, before students fall behind. RMS also uses these assessments to identify the bottom 20 percent of students for in-lab tutoring in both subject areas. New to the learning lab in 2011-12 is the development of RISE—Rocketship's Individualized Scheduling Engine—which integrates all academic data into a single system and allows Rocketship to focus students' Learning Lab time on specific skills that align with the units being taught in the classrooms.

Academic Leagues *at* Clarence Edwards Middle School / Boston, MA

Clarence Edwards Middle School

Principal: Leo Flanagan

School schedule: 7:10am–3:45pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 135 min/day

Student Population
Grades served: 6–8
Number of students: 496
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 87%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 56% (+5%)

Math: 40% (+4%)

Once among the lowest-performing middle schools in Boston, Clarence Edwards Middle School is now one of the most successful turnaround schools in Massachusetts. At Edwards Middle School, expanded-learning time has allowed for a differentiated, data-driven approach to instruction that has resulted in dramatic academic gains. During the past three years, eighth-grade students at Edwards Middle School have entirely closed the achievement gap with the state in math, and they have dramatically narrowed the gap in English language arts (ELA) and science.

Edwards Middle School has deployed a two-part strategy for boosting student learning and achievement—a simultaneous focus on strengthening instruction in core academic classes and augmenting and reinforcing that learning through a tiered, academic support program which the school calls "Academic Leagues." Meeting one hour each day, Monday through Thursday, Academic Leagues provide each Edwards student with tailored academic support in math, ELA, or science. Academic Leagues feature small class sizes of 15 students and are led by Edwards teachers. Within the Leagues, students are grouped with other students who are showing comparable weaknesses and knowledge gaps, so that teachers can target instruction specifically to their needs. "Academic Leagues are an opportunity to give students extra time and more targeted instruction," explains Stephanie Crement, special educator at Edwards. "Here, I really have an opportunity to do intervention and to target a particular group of students who need a certain kind of focused intervention."

To design the Academic Leagues, Edwards faculty teams initially pored over the existing curriculum and student assessment data to identify strands and standards that they believed were not receiving sufficient attention in core classes. They then structured the Leagues to address these standards. Within this framework, teachers prepare their own lesson plans based on their students' needs. A key component in creating lessons for the Leagues is the analysis of interim assessment tests that Edwards students take four to five times a year. "When we look at student data, we can determine the support that students need based on how they performed within a standard. Then we will group students accordingly, based on their performances within the standards," explains Amrita Sahni, director of instruction. The data also allows teachers to adjust pacing and content based on the results.

Each year, considerable planning goes into deciding how to place students in specific Academic Leagues. Students who struggle in math are assigned to a Math League for all four days; students who struggle in ELA are assigned to an ELA League for all four days; and students who are proficient in both ELA and math (a minority of the students) are placed in the Science League. When students are struggling in multiple areas, or are severely underperforming in one area, the instructional leadership team is creative in identifying the right set of supports for the student. While most students at Edwards participate in an elective class of their choice four days a week —such as theatre, break-dancing, art, or football—some students are asked to scale back their elective classes to two days and participate in an additional academic support during their elective time. For example, a student who scored very low in math and ELA on last year's state assessment might be assigned to a Math League four days a week, and then, in place of one of his two electives, might be assigned another class two days a week where he participates in the Read 180 curriculum designed specifically for students with very low literacy skills. This arrangement still allows the student to participate in at least one elective twice a week, with the incentive to work extra hard in order to earn his way out of the additional academic support so that he can take a second elective. During the elective time, Edwards also offers a special math acceleration class for students with very low math skills.

Individualized Supports and Safety Nets *at* Golder College Prep / Chicago, IL

Golder College Prep

Principal: Rosa Alanis

School schedule: 8:00am–3:20pm

Early release: 8:20am–1:40pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 80 min/day and 7 days/year

Student Population
Grades served: 9–12
Number of students: 540
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 88%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 47% (+14%)

Math: 49% (+20%)

Golder College Prep, in Chicago, Illinois, is part of the Noble Network, a charter management organization founded in 2005 that now operates 10 high schools in Chicago, serving a total of 5,400 students. In addition to allowing time for all students to enroll in two English and two math classes, the school's expanded schedule creates opportunities for students to receive individualized instructional support based on their areas of academic need. These opportunities include lab periods, office hours, LaSalle Street daily homework help, an academic intervention program, and Golder Success Academy.

Lab period is a highly structured study hall that provides all students with a daily opportunity to work on assignments from their academic courses with guidance and support from teachers. Homework is an important part of Golder's academic program, and students are assigned between two and three hours of homework each night. Because students are in school for long hours and because many students lack structures and supports at home to facilitate homework completion, Golder provides time during the day to start this work in a supervised environment. In order to help students make productive use of their time, teachers require them to use lab tracker sheets through which they set out goals and then assess their own progress.

Each day after school, Golder College Prep teachers hold **office hours**, during which students can stop by to ask questions or receive individualized support on a particular subject or assignment. While every teacher is responsible for holding office hours on at least one afternoon each week, some teachers choose to make themselves available more frequently. One math teacher explains, "If I can work one-on-one with a student for a few minutes and help them understand something, that makes my job easier and more fun during the rest of the week in class." The school intentionally refers to these after-school times as "office hours" to familiarize students—many of whom will be the first in their families to attend college—with the terminology and concept of seeking out instructors to discuss class work and assignments and deepen their understanding of course content.

Teachers at Golder College Prep also staff an after-school homework help program called **LaSalle Street** (the name of the business district in Chicago), which was inspired by KIPP schools' "Wall Street" after-school homework centers. LaSalle Street is designed as a productive alternative to detention for students—mainly freshmen and sophomores—who have not completed all of their assigned homework for the day. At least one teacher from each subject area is present to help students catch up on their assignments and raise their grade point averages. Students who are failing two or more classes, or have a grade point average below 2.0, at the end of each quarter must attend LaSalle Street as part of the school's **academic intervention program** (AIP). The purpose of the AIP is to provide early and effective interventions for students struggling in their academic work. Once a student is in the AIP, their progress is closely monitored and they are prohibited from participating in extracurricular competitions. Students can cycle out of AIP after as little as two weeks, if they have made adequate improvements to their grades.

Students who are at the most risk academically and behaviorally receive small group attention and support through **Golder Success Academy**. Students enrolled in this program meet with an administrator weekly for a one-on-one check-in during designated lab times. In these sessions, the student and administrator set academic and behavioral benchmarks for the coming week and review progress toward previous weeks' benchmarks. There are incentives for students who meet or exceed benchmarks. Michael Kucera, Golder College Prep's assistant principal of curriculum and professional development, credits the Success Academy program for its success in retaining at risk students, "Without Golder Success Academy, most of these students would not persist at Golder. Instead, we're seeing 50 percent retention of students who participate."

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ZONE 3
ZONE 2

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

4 Use Time to Build a School Culture of High Expectations and Mutual Accountability

Research shows that one of the key factors that distinguishes high-performing, high-poverty schools from low performing ones is their high expectations for student behavior and academic achievement.[2] When poor and minority students are expected to master a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum and are provided with appropriate supports, they achieve at high levels. Many of the high-performing, expanded-time schools we studied work to establish and maintain a school-wide culture that values learning, academic achievement, and positive behavior, and many educators at these schools consider this positive culture a crucial ingredient in their success.

Clearly, time allocation is not the only, or even the primary, driver affecting school culture. Indeed, a school culture of high expectations is built and maintained in many different ways that may not necessarily involve time, such as school mottos, consistently reinforced values, incentive systems, consistent messaging from leaders and teachers, etc. However, the high-performing, expanded-time schools we studied do invest time in their schedules for activities and events that build a culture of high expectations. For example, they invest time in summer orientation sessions that establish expectations for student behavior and effort, advisory programs that teach core school values, and community or town hall meetings that showcase and reward individual and collective student achievements and improvements.

10 Number of high-performing, expanded-time schools that hold summer orientation programs for incoming, and sometimes even returning, students

One-third of the schools in our study hold summer orientation programs for incoming, and sometimes even for returning, students. Excel Academy in Boston, Massachusetts for instance, holds a week-long summer orientation that every student is required to attend. (See sidebar: "Creating a Culture of Achievement at Excel Academy Charter School") During this time, students sing songs and practice chants that embody the school's expectations. Excel students also participate in group discussions that begin to build a sense of community throughout the school. "The summer session lets us communicate our expectations and culture to all our students so that they come in the first day of school and they know what is expected of them," says Rebecca Korb, Excel's director of resource development. Meanwhile, at YES Prep North Central in Houston, Texas, the summer program for incoming ninth-grade students, led by the school's upperclassmen, prepares them for the high expectations held for all enrolled there. And schools in the KIPP network, including those in our study, use a week-long summer session to set expectations, introduce rewards and consequences, and teach routines. (See sidebar: "'Work Hard. Be Nice.' Expectations at KIPP SHINE Prep") At Excel, YES Prep, and KIPP, the summer sessions also begin to build a common language throughout the school, one that communicates an expectation of persistence and achievement.

Many high-performing, expanded-time schools also schedule time into the school day to reinforce expectations and communicate a core set of school values. Before the start of classes each morning, students at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy, in San Jose, California, participate in a "Morning Launch," reciting the school's academic goals and singing songs that promote achievement. At Williamsburg Collegiate, in Brooklyn, New York, the four "core values"—mindful, achieving, professional, and prepared (MAPP)—are reinforced daily through the school's advisory period. "During advisory, we're explicitly teaching and re-teaching our four MAPP values," says Julie Kennedy, School Leader at Williamsburg Collegiate. "Having additional time is great because we can have the advisory period without cutting into the academic period." At YES Prep North Central, a weekly advisory period also helps to reinforce the school culture throughout the school year.

Assemblies, town-hall meetings, and other such school-wide gatherings also frequently offer staged and extemporaneous opportunities to further reinforce values and expectations. Thirteen of the schools hold these types of events on a regular basis. Roxbury Prep, in Boston, Massachusetts, schedules community meetings every Friday to recognize both individual students, as well as particular classrooms, for academic achievements. "Community meetings are meant to be a joyous occasion," says Greg Woodward, a Roxbury Prep teacher. "Students present poems, classes do skits, and each week we award a spirit stick just based on attitude." IDEA College Preparatory Donna, in Donna, Texas, schedules a weekly town hall meeting to reinforce school culture by giving students a voice in certain school decisions. (See sidebar: "School Culture at IDEA College Preparatory Donna") During these gatherings, students meet with administrators to express concerns and to propose and debate changes to school rules and routines.

A number of schools also dedicate time toward character education. At Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus in Philadelphia, students learn conflict resolution skills and professional conduct during their social emotional learning (SEL) class, held four days each week. "Because our students come from a school that had been really broken, they are not used to buying into a positive school culture," explains Daniel Bell, Mastery Shoemaker's director of operations. "We try to get our students to buy in. SEL is one way. We give our students real life examples and then discuss how they could handle themselves to make them more effective individuals." Similarly, An Achievable Dream Middle and High School in Newport News, Virginia, has also developed a unique Social and Moral Education (S.A.M.E) curriculum to teach standards of professionalism as well as etiquette. Students then have the opportunity to take these skills into internships, college visits, and other field trips. "When we take our kids out on trips," explains Amy Runge, An Achievable Dream's vice principal, "our hosts are always complimenting us on how polite and respectful our students act."

Finally, many of the schools we examined have implemented an incentive system designed to reward positive student behavior—particularly hard work and perseverance—and to teach accountability. As many as 23 of the 30 schools in our study described administering a school-wide incentive system that allows students to earn points, which can be used to purchase special privileges, such as uniform-free days, field trips, or items in a school store. At many KIPP schools, students earn "KIPP dollars" for adhering to the KIPP motto of "Work hard. Be nice." Each week, KIPP dollars are tabulated and totals are distributed to each student through a "paycheck," which can be redeemed at the school store for prizes, such as pencils, binders, and t-shirts. Near the end of each school year, KIPP students must also have earned a certain amount of KIPP dollars to be eligible for the end of the year trip. "Paychecks are a way to remind our students that everything, both in school and life, is earned," says Ken Estrella, School Leader at KIPP Houston High School. While not a specific allocation of time in the student schedule, these systems can take time to implement effectively because they require consistent monitoring and application by adults during the day. Teachers need to take time to award points, maintain records, and calculate totals—not a trivial undertaking during their already busy days.

In and of themselves, all these programs and activities are not secrets to success; schools with far less impressive student outcomes also offer advisory programs and school assemblies. However, when thoughtfully designed, and implemented as part of a coherent vision for the school's culture, these investments of time play an important role in creating a school environment that helps students thrive academically and socially. We identified three specific tactics these schools deploy to make certain that time devoted to enhancing school culture succeeds in setting and reinforcing high expectations for student behavior and achievement:

Identify and consistently reinforce a small set of core values that are easy to remember

To keep expectations clear, many schools identify a small number of core values and thread these values throughout all their efforts to build a strong school culture. Williamsburg Collegiate's acronym, MAPP—standing for mindful, achieving, professional, and prepared, as described above—is bolstered through the advisory program and the school's incentive system. Students earn MAPP dollars as an incentive for demonstrating the four core values, and twice a year, students use their MAPP dollars to bid on items at the school auction. Excel Academy uses the acronym PREP (prepared, respectful, engaged, and professional) to communicate the school values to students. Students at Excel learn about the PREP values in summer orientation and discuss them in a weekly community circle. Plus, the PREP values are displayed prominently in each classroom, and the school's incentive system underscores these values: Excel students can earn merits in each class for exhibiting PREP values—and similarly collect demerits for violating them. Merits can be exchanged for items at a school store, while demerits lead to detention. Such succinct sets of values—and the acronyms that describe them—make it easy for students to remember what is expected of them and also make it easy for teachers and administrators to consistently mention them in class.

Train and support staff in setting and reinforcing expectations

Maintaining high expectations requires the involvement of teachers to remind students daily of their school's values and goals. Just as schools hold summer sessions for students to learn expectations and school values, new teachers typically spend time learning about and internalizing the school culture and values, prior to their start. Teachers also are involved in planning activities and school events that reinforce school expectations. At KIPP SHINE, one teacher in each grade level is designated as the "culture chair." These teachers ensure that high expectations are met in the classrooms of their grade-level peers, and they also plan a Friday celebration each week to recognize student achievement. Because leaders at Mastery Shoemaker consider the work of building a strong school culture to be extremely important, they've appointed a dean of school culture, who supports school staff in the implementation of student orientations, incentive systems, school-wide events, and the advisory program.

Communicate expectations to parents

Engaging parents and family members in reinforcing the values and expectations of the school provides additional role models for students and helps ensure consistent messaging to students. At KIPP Houston schools, all students in Pre-K, fifth grade, and ninth grade receive a home visit before the start of the school year. During this time, a KIPP staff member reviews the school's expectations with the family; each visit ends with a contract that details the responsibilities of the parent, teacher, and student. At Rocketship Mateo Sheedy, parents are invited to participate in frequent community nights, and classrooms with the highest parent attendance are recognized each month. "We hold our students to high expectations because we know they can reach them," says Maricela Guerrero, Principal at Rocketship Mateo Sheedy. "Having our teachers repeat that message over and over again in the classroom is vital, but when our students go home, it's important for their parents, brothers, and sisters to tell them the same thing. That's when students actually internalize that message and believe it themselves."

Keys to Success

- Identify and consistently reinforce a small set of core values that are easy to remember
- Train and support staff in setting and reinforcing expectations
- Communicate expectations to parents

"Work Hard. Be Nice." Expectations *at* KIPP SHINE Prep / Houston, TX

KIPP SHINE Prep

Principal: Deb Shifrine

School schedule: 7:25am–5:00pm

Early release: 7:25am–3:45pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 155 min/day

Student Population

Grades served: PK–4

Number of students: 801

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 96%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 92% (+7%)

Math: 96% (+11%)

"Seek. Honor. Imagine. Never give up. Every day." These five tenets make up the name of KIPP SHINE Prep, in Houston, Texas, and these words also comprise the values and expectations students are held to each day at this charter elementary school. At KIPP SHINE PREP, every child—or SHINEster—is expected to go to, and through, college, and the school communicates this message early and often. Before SHINEsters begin their first day of school, they learn about the school's expectations for them through home visits and a summer session. When the school year begins, students see the banners reminding them to "climb the mountain to college," and to "Work hard. Be nice,"—KIPP's trademark motto that set the foundation for its expectations and values. Each day, these essential phrases are constantly repeated by teachers and administrators, in classrooms, hallways, and assemblies that celebrate student success.

Prior to the start of the school year, KIPP SHINE Prep teachers visit the home of every incoming student to communicate the expectation of going to college. At the end of each hour-long visit, students, parents, and a teacher sign a "Commitment to Excellence," detailing the responsibilities of each person to helping the SHINEster reach that goal. Additionally, all new students attend a week-long summer session in which they learn the school's expectations and routines. During these sessions, students practice the school's expectations until they have mastered them, in the same way they would learn academic content. SHINEsters practice lining up to enter into a classroom, along with using hand gestures to silently praise their peers, and singing songs that expound KIPP's core values. By creating a culture of high expectations in the summer, students arrive ready to learn, starting on the first day of classes. "We've found that SHINEsters learn better and we can challenge them more if they know what is expected of them when they come in," says Melissa Moussalli, RTI Coordinator and Literacy Content Specialist at KIPP SHINE Prep.

KIPP SHINE Prep also devotes time during the school year to reinforce the expectations established before the start of school. In all classrooms, SHINEsters are constantly reminded of the school's values and are expected to internalize and display these values at all times. As Deb Shifrine, the school leader at KIPP SHINE Prep, explains, "If you were to walk into any classroom, you might hear a teacher say something like, 'Marcus, please seek your teammate right now,' as a reminder to Marcus that he needs to be focusing on his work in order to honor his own learning and his teammates' learning too." At the end of each week, SHINEsters gather for a celebration that showcases student learning and recognizes student achievement. Students also participate in activities, such as skits, that help them internalize and showcase KIPP values.

KIPP SHINE Prep staff members also devote time beyond the school day to develop and maintain close relationships with its families. "One of our goals is to ensure that our students and parents are really invested in their education so that they want to be in school—every day," states Shifrine. Along with home visits for every incoming SHINEster, KIPP SHINE Prep also hosts an "Imagine the Possibilities" day four times a year for all Pre-Kindergarten families. During this time, teachers highlight examples of student work, and also model future lessons so that parents know what their SHINEsters are learning at school. "Although it takes a lot of time, developing the joy factor [for learning] is something we take very seriously at KIPP SHINE," says Shifrine. "It involves not only me and our great teachers, but also our parents. We want our students to know that we believe they can and will go to, and through, college—and we are here to help them, every step of the way."

Creating a Culture of Achievement *at* Excel Academy Charter School / Boston, MA

Excel Academy Charter School

Principal: Komal Bhasin

School schedule: 7:30am–3:45pm

Early release: 7:30am–1:30pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 120 min/day and 7 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: 5–8

Number of students: 212

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 72%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010 *(difference compared to surrounding district)*

ELA: 95% (+46%)

Math: 91% (+54%)

The walls, hallways, and classrooms at Excel Academy, in Boston, Massachusetts, communicate a sense of achievement and a focus on college. Adorning the walls are college pennants, class cheers, and pictures of former students who have since enrolled in college. Most of the school's physical spaces are intentionally decorated to create the school's culture, but they are just one aspect of a highly intentional set of activities that the school uses to emphasize its high expectations for all students. Excel also uses time in its expanded day schedule and the summer to set and reinforce this culture.

"The rules for school are the rules for life," declares Komal Bhasin, Excel's principal, during the school's summer orientation. For one week each summer, Excel students learn and re-learn the school's high expectations for achievement and college entry. Incoming students hear from older students about their experiences at the school and the hard work they engaged in to prepare for college. Students learn and practice cheers that celebrate achievement throughout the year. During the summer orientation, incoming students also meet in community circles for the first time to learn school policies as well as the school's core values, captured in the acronym PREP—standing for Prepared, Respectful, Engaged, and Professional.

Inside their classrooms, teachers use the summer session to establish expectations of academic rigor, including nightly reading and an average of three hours of homework. They also begin to build a sense of classroom community, creating a class chant and encouraging students to support one another. "During the summer orientation," says Bhasin, "we tell students that they are part of a wolf pack and to think of their classmates as teammates." Both the school-wide and classroom expectations are also communicated to parents during summer orientation. The week culminates with the signing of a parent and student contract, committing both to working toward the goal of college enrollment.

From the first day of school until the last, the expectations that were taught during Excel's summer session continue to play a vital role. At any time throughout the day, students may receive merits and demerits for exhibiting or failing to meet the school's core PREP values. Students may exchange merits for supplies and prizes at the school's store or specific privileges, such as visiting other classrooms during breaks, or dress-down days. In addition to the daily reinforcement, Principal Bhasin also leads a weekly 35-minute community circle for each grade, focused on drawing connections to the outside world, building school community, and celebrating student success. Even during breaks throughout the day, teachers recite their classroom chant and often play games promoting teamwork. Immediately following February vacation, Excel commits additional time towards a re-orientation to remind students, once again, of the expectations taught during the summer. "Having the time during the summer and the school year to build the culture at Excel is an invaluable part of what we do," Bhasin confirms. "By establishing high expectations for all students, it makes the time they have in class even more effective and efficient in helping them learn the skills they need to succeed."

School Culture *at* IDEA College Preparatory Donna / Donna, TX

IDEA College Preparatory Donna

Principal: Christina Cavazos-Escamilla

School schedule: 7:45am–3:45pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 45 min/day

Student Population

Grades served: 6–12

Number of students: 810

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 86%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 96% (+19%)

Math: 90% (+17%)

The IDEA Public Schools network consists of 10 schools serving over 5,000 students in grades K-12. IDEA's flagship campus, IDEA College Preparatory Donna (ICP Donna) in Donna, Texas, has graduated four classes of seniors, 100 percent of whom enrolled in a four-year college or university. Three-fourths of all ICP Donna graduates are first-generation college students. To date, 97 percent of all ICP Donna seniors who entered college are still enrolled, a statistic that dramatically outpaces national averages for college retention among low-income, Hispanic, and first-generation college students.

In addition to implementing a rigorous academic program to meet their school's goal of propelling each of its students to college and successful citizenship, leaders at ICP Donna engage students and staff in developing a positive school atmosphere that supports learning, along with a culture that demands and rewards excellence.

Acculturation Process for Incoming Students

At the beginning of every school year, ICP Donna runs an orientation session for all new students to teach the expectations, values, and routines of the school. They also pair each new student with a "PAL" (Peer Assistance Leader), who is an experienced student at the school and exemplifies the school's values. The goal of the PAL Program is to ensure that each student persists from year-to-year at ICP Donna. At the beginning of the year, the PAL program is more structured, as new students are asked to have lunch with their PALs and staff checks in with PALs on the new students' progress. Later in the year, the PAL program becomes more casual. Throughout, students are able to provide one another with valuable, even unique, support, and they also alert the adults if more social or academic support is needed. Additionally, staff members share information and updates about new students during staff meetings, and the school's Social Counselor keeps new students—and any students who are struggling—on a "watch list" to ensure that they receive extra attention.

Designated Time to Teach, Review, and Discuss School Values

Every day, all students at ICP Donna have 15 minutes of homeroom. Parental signatures on homework and student planners are checked during this time, but the main focus of the homeroom period is to reinforce the culture and values of the school. One of the primary tools used to communicate ICP Donna's values is a document called "IDEA 55," a document the school created, based on educator Ron Clark's "Essential 55" rules for "discovering the successful student in every child." Rules from IDEA 55—such as, "Don't wait to be told what to do: Assign yourself"—are discussed during homeroom to revisit and underscore the school's core values. There is also time for "shout outs," where students briefly acknowledge one another for their accomplishments. Positive school culture is further developed during lunchtime at ICP Donna. Administrators use the time while students are eating—time which at many schools would not be programmed—to do presentations that highlight school values in a fun and entertaining way. Finally, every Friday ICP Donna holds a town hall meeting, which gives students a designated time to have conversations with the school leaders and to share their feedback on school rules and culture. Administrators have found that providing this deliberate opportunity for input and dialogue increases students' sense of belonging and buy-in to the school's norms and values.

No Shortcuts.
No Excuses.

5

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

Use Time to Provide a Well-Rounded Education

Researchers have documented, and educators and policymakers are increasingly concerned about, a narrowing of the curriculum that has taken place in American schools over the past several decades. The standards and accountability movements have placed increased scrutiny on standardized test scores leading many schools to shift time to the tested subjects—particularly math and English language arts (ELA)—at the expense of non-tested subjects, such as social studies, science, foreign language, music, and the arts. Research shows that the time spent on these non-tested subjects across the nation's elementary schools has been cut by one-third since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).[3] While many students do, in fact, need more time on task to become proficient in math and ELA, to be successful in today's knowledge-based economy they also need time to develop the scientific knowledge, the historical awareness, and the creative thinking and problem-solving skills that come from a well-rounded education. Low-income students, in particular, need exposure in school to a rich array of topics, skills, and knowledge, because they are less likely than their more affluent peers to receive this exposure at home or through extracurricular activities pursued outside of school.[4] When it is well-used, more time can help to close the *opportunity gap* now prevalent in low-income schools, as well as the more often recognized *achievement gap*. Moreover, by offering students engaging learning opportunities that appeal to their diverse skills, interests, and learning styles, well-rounded schools may combat the high drop-out rates that plague low-income communities.

Even the expanded-time schools in this study struggle with an inherent conflict between the need to provide rigorous core instruction in English and math with the need to expose students to enriching and diverse learning opportunities in the arts, sciences, and even in business and government. As a group, the schools in this study expand time for ELA and math more than any other subject, but some schools have also figured out how to leverage their expanded school schedule to enable them to offer a well-rounded educational program.

KIPP SHINE, an elementary school in Houston, Texas, schedules over six hours of Spanish for each student per week, so that all students are bilingual by the time they reach middle school. Clarence Edwards Middle School, in Boston, devotes seven hours each week to elective classes, such as swimming, Latin dance, theater, guitar, and environmental science. Nearby, Boston Arts Academy, an urban high school founded on the conviction that academics and the arts are equally important to student development and achievement, devotes 9.5 hours each week to various performing arts. This school could not fulfill its mission of providing a rigorous arts and a rigorous academic education without additional time. At Matthew J. Kuss Middle School in Fall River, Massachusetts, students can choose from a variety of electives, such as cooking, theater, and television production. (See sidebar: "Engaging Electives at Matthew J. Kuss Middle School") Each day, students at Arthur Ashe Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana, participate in a 90-minute enrichment period led by community organizations from throughout the city. Students at Woodland Hills Academy in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, may receive up to three periods, or 135 minutes, that can include a combination of art, technology, Spanish, or a student-selected "Pathway," an elective class designed and taught by teachers based on student and teacher interests. (See sidebar: "Pathways at Woodland Hills Academy")

Some of the high-performing, expanded-time schools also connect students to exciting opportunities that take place during the summer. KIPP Heartwood, in San Jose, California, links a majority of its students to summer opportunities at universities and museums. "So many of our students don't get the opportunities those in the suburbs may get outside of school. Our coordinator works with different organizations, helps students with the application process, and identifies scholarships for students so fees don't hold them back," explains Judy Tang, School Leader at KIPP Heartwood. At Golder College Prep in Chicago, Illinois, students choose from a variety of activities to fulfill their 200-hour enrichment requirement before graduation. (See sidebar: "Beyond Academics at Golder College Prep") Students accumulate hours, both by enrolling in elective classes offered throughout the school day as well as engaging in activities outside the school.

"We wanted to fit in two math and two literacy classes, along with science and social studies, and create a balance where we didn't have to eliminate enrichment opportunities. The only way to do that was expanding the school day."

Greg Woodward,
School Leader, Roxbury Preparatory Academy

The high-performing, expanded-time schools in our study that have committed time in the school day or year to provide a more well-rounded education highlight three specific practices that help make this time effective:

Respond to student interests

High-performing, expanded-time schools look to schedule elective classes that align to student interests. Amistad Academy in Hartford, Connecticut, surveys students each trimester to determine which enrichment classes to offer during the school's daily, 55-minute "Encore" period. By providing students with choices each trimester among its 15 enrichment classes, Amistad exposes them to a variety of activities, and consequently, students are often more engaged because they have been able to select according to their own interests. "The mission behind the Encore program is to get kids to college and create good citizens," says Matt Taylor, School Leader at Amistad. "We don't want them to be academic automatons, so we want to be able to offer classes they're interested in. Colleges are also looking for well-rounded people. Our students also need to develop non-academic skills and interests to be competitive with their more affluent peers in the college admissions process."

Start with exposure and offer opportunities for specialization and mastery

Exposure to a variety of opportunities can help students identify interests, but once those interests emerge, many schools offer opportunities for students to delve more deeply in some areas and to really develop their skills. Specializing and building skills can enhance student's confidence and teach important lessons about the value of practice and hard work. "The philosophy in fifth grade is that we expect them to try a variety of things," states Judy Tang, of KIPP Heartwood. "By seventh and eighth grade, they should be sticking to something." KIPP Heartwood exposes students to music in the fifth grade with either band or choir. Students who become particularly interested in the band may receive individual music lessons from college music students. The school also connects students to music programs at a number of universities during the summer. Similarly, students at Clarence Edwards Middle students have the opportunity to explore a number of different pursuits in the visual and performing arts. A large number of students develop specific areas of interest and end up applying to Boston's audition-based performing arts school, Boston Arts Academy, which is also profiled in this study.

Create partnerships that bring in outside expertise and leverage the skills and expertise of teachers

The expertise of outside organizations and partners can enhance the quality of enrichment offerings. Many of the high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study are located near community-based organizations, non-profits, colleges, universities, businesses, and other organizations that can lend their expertise and connect students to the outside world. To staff its 15 enrichment classes each trimester, Amistad reaches out to various New Haven partner organizations, whose personnel teach classes such as karate and African drum. Clarence Edwards Middle School's partner, Citizen Schools, designs and teaches hands-on courses, ranging from law and finance to architecture and web design. Through this unique partnership, every sixth-grader participates in the Citizen Schools apprenticeship and leadership-training program, which is typically offered as an optional after-school program at most schools.

"In other schools, sometimes it becomes difficult to get to social studies and science.... Here, we can get into those subjects. We're also able to provide other complementary classes like Spanish and technology. Overall, we are able to give students more."

Reginald Hickman
Principal, Woodland Hills Academy

In addition to forging such partnerships with outside organizations, some schools have teachers and administrators design and teach elective classes based on their own particular interests. Often, leading these classes allows teachers to develop deeper relationships with their students. At Woodland Hills Academy, students choose between different electives offered by classroom teachers. "Classroom teachers are able to choose the elective they'd like to lead, based on their interests and skills," says Reginald Hickman, principal at Woodland Hills. "It's a great opportunity for them to work with students in a different way and gives them a chance to share their other talents with the children." Edwards Middle School and Kuss Middle School offer a combination of teacher-led and partner-led elective programs for their students.

Keys to Success

- Respond to student interests
- Start with exposure and offer opportunities for specialization and mastery
- Create partnerships that bring in outside expertise and leverage the skills and expertise of teachers

Engaging Electives *at* Matthew J. Kuss Middle School / Fall River, MA

Matthew J. Kuss Middle School

Principal: Nancy Mullen

School schedule: 7:15am–3:35pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 120 min/day

Student Population

Grades served: 6–8

Number of students: 650

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 84%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 57% (+4%)

Math: 47% (+10%)

When Kuss Middle School, in Fall River, Massachusetts, adopted an expanded school day in 2006, administrators and staff developed a robust enrichment program that would reinvigorate their students' desire to learn. Kuss capitalized on the skills and talents of its faculty and partnered with community organizations such as the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, and SMILES (a local mentoring program) in order to provide their students with an array of enrichment opportunities. Today, Kuss offers over 30 different enrichment electives, in addition to the standard specialty classes (PE/health, art, music, and foreign language) all students take. To accommodate these electives, the school integrated two, back-to-back, 45-minute class periods into the daily schedule allowing Kuss students to take up to two different electives each day; struggling students may receive a combination of enrichment and academic supports during this time.

In addition to five 90-minute core academic science periods each week, students also take at least one 45-minute science elective. These electives are designed with two main goals: targeting gaps in the standard science curricula and awakening students' passion for science through a teacher-created curriculum centered on their own interests. Teachers are given planning time to design their electives, which are mapped to the state science standards. Examples of science electives offered in the 2010-2011 school year include: Design Lab, Duct Tape Engineering, Weather Watchers, Field Studies (in partnership with the Urban Ecology Institute), Project Go-Green, Astronomy I, II, and III (in partnership with the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics), Forensics, Marine Ecology, Science of the Titanic, and Mosaic of Science.

This considerable array of choices enables students to discover new interests and to develop their existing talents. Many of the electives—including band, art, video production, and theater—are offered at different levels, or over several semesters or years, allowing students to move toward mastery. Students who are interested in the performing arts, for instance, can participate in the school's award-winning theater arts program for all three years of middle school. "Being involved in the Kuss theater program helped me find something I want for my major in college and my future career. I think more people are coming to our school because they know that there is at least one thing that will make their middle school years memorable," explains Xavielys Perez, a Kuss student. In fact, the school's theater program has become so popular, it has been expanded to include acting workshops, technical theater (set and lighting design), and costume design. Each year, Kuss sends a delegation of students to the Massachusetts Middle School Drama Festival, where the school won a gold medal in 2009.

Like many of the electives Kuss offers, this program reinforces what students are learning in their core academic classes. By producing *Macbeth* and *Little Shop of Horrors*, the program exposes students to literature that is traditionally a part of the high school English curriculum. Before students can perform, they must do a deep analysis of the text, learn advanced vocabulary, and discuss key concepts such as theme, character, and plot development.

Many of the school's elective courses culminate in a final product, performance, or presentation, allowing students to demonstrate what they have learned for their peers, families, and the community at the end of a semester. The video production class, for example, created a music video to get students excited about the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System—the state's standardized test). These talented young producers were responsible for the writing, acting/dancing, filming, and editing that went into the music video.

Pathways *at* Woodland Hills Academy / Turtle Creek, PA

Woodland Hills Academy

Principal: Reginald Hickman

School schedule: 8:45am–4:15pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 60 min/day and 15 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: K–7

Number of students: 300

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 64%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 69% (+17%)

Math: 86% (+26%)

Woodland Hills Academy in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, opened in 2008 as part of a series of changes to improve the Woodland Hills school system which was plagued by low test scores and violence. In its first year of operation, Woodland Hills posted the highest test scores in the district, and the school continues to do so. According to Reginald Hickman, principal of Woodland Hills Academy, "Extra learning time is one of the major reasons we performed as well as we did, particularly in math. Plus, it has given us enrichment time, giving our students a more rounded education."

One way in which the Academy is giving students more educational opportunities is through its enrichment electives, called "Pathways." Developed by the school's faculty, the Pathways engage students in subjects beyond the standard curriculum. Students can choose to take a Pathway course, over and above the two specials they already have each day, as long as they do not require remediation—remediation and Pathways take place at the same time. Students interested in taking Pathways must decide at the beginning of the year which Pathway they will take and stay enrolled in that class for its duration—with some courses meeting the entire year, while others, like Community Theater, ending after a final performance. The Pathway offerings range from kindergarteners learning about the origins of the food they're eating, to third-graders exploring world health issues, to fifth-graders developing strong public speaking skills, among many other courses designed for each grade level.

While each grade level has its own unique offerings, Pathways are taught by teachers from across all the grade levels. Throughout the school day, each teacher has essentially three open periods: two planning periods and a period in which Pathways are taking place for the grade level that they teach. During any one of their three open periods, teachers may choose to lead a Pathway if it overlaps with any grade levels' Pathway period. For instance, the school's seventh-grade English teacher leads the public speaking Pathway for fifth graders, because she has an open period during the fifth-grade Pathway period. Choosing to teach a Pathway during this time, the teacher can use the seventh-grade Pathway period for her own planning. Though many teachers choose to teach a Pathway, it is not currently a requirement. However, most teachers who are not currently involved with a Pathway usually teach an intervention class or lead a structured study time in which students who do not require remediation and are not enrolled in a Pathway are given advanced work in one of their core subject areas.

To give students a clear sense of what they will be learning throughout the course, each Pathway has a "central focus" based on "big ideas." For example, the central focus for the Pathway "Money" declares: "Economic systems of barter and exchange have developed over time for use within communities." The big ideas that students will learn about in this course include: "How money systems have developed through time"; "How bartering and exchange are related to trade and work"; and "How we can be responsible in our spending habits." Such clearly defined statements help students to appreciate a Pathway's academic framework and to engage with the content and direction of the course.

Community Theater Pathway

An energetic seventh-grade English teacher named Kelly Moreno is exposing students to the world of performing arts in her community theater "Pathway." Students taking this course read a variety of screenplays, learn acting techniques, and perform short theatrical skits for the school. This past year, Moreno's students were able to showcase their talents in the Shakespeare Monologue and Scene Contest in Pittsburgh. "This was such a fulfilling experience," says Moreno, "and I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with this great group of kids!"

Beyond Academics *at* Golder College Prep / Chicago, IL

Golder College Prep

Principal: Rosa Alanis

School schedule: 8:00am–3:20pm

Early release: 8:20am–1:40pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 80 min/day and 7 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: 9–12

Number of students: 540

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 88%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 47% (+14%)

Math: 49% (+20%)

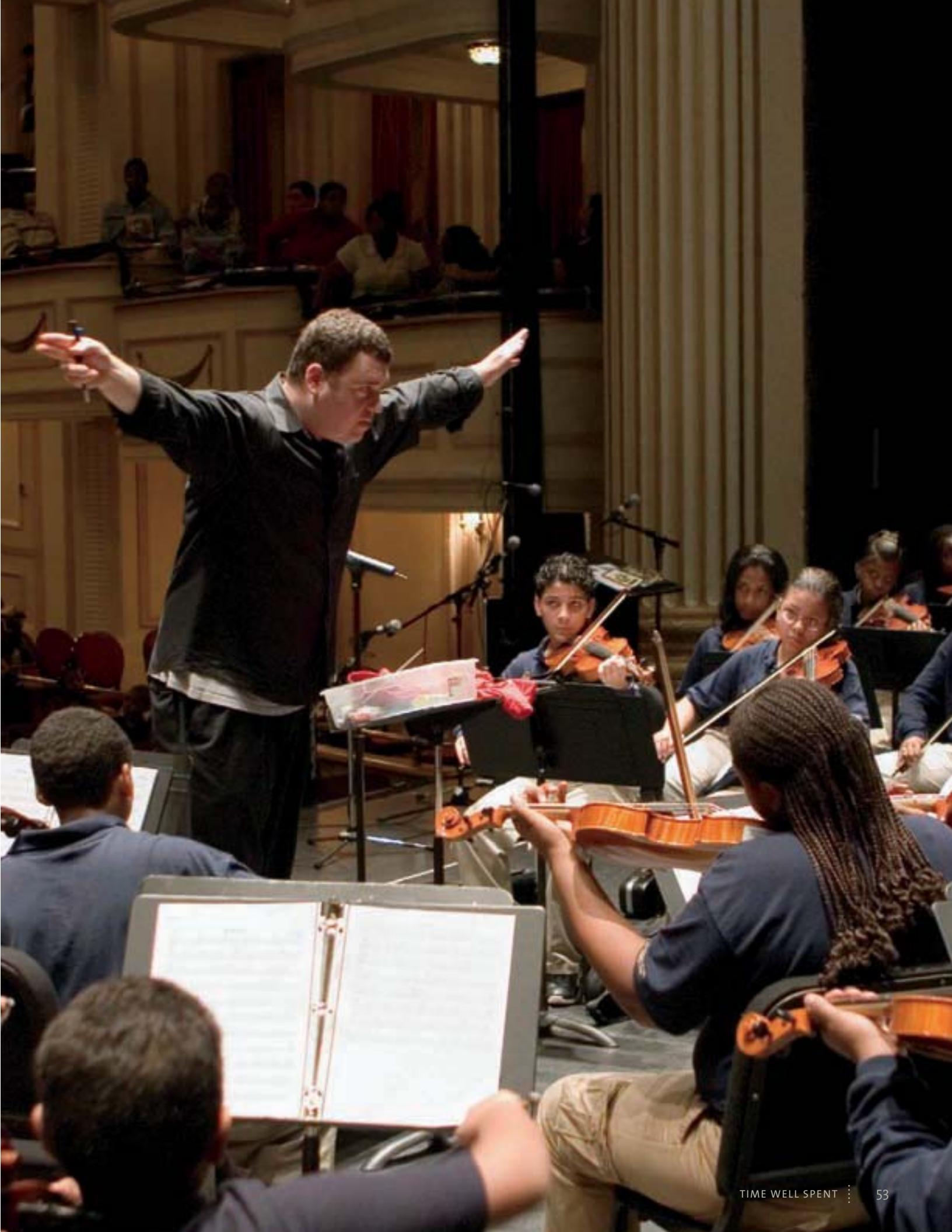
School administrators, teachers, and students herald Golder College Prep's engaging enrichment opportunities as one of the distinguishing elements of the school's design. Students at Golder, located in Chicago, Illinois, are enrolled in a robust academic schedule: All students take two English classes and two math classes throughout their tenure at the school as well as college-prep science, social studies, foreign language classes, and more typical "specials classes" including physical education, art, and music. In addition to this full program of studies, over the course of their four years at Golder, students also are required to complete 200 hours of enrichment activities outside of the traditional school day. To fulfill this 200-hour requirement, students can select from a diverse array of activities that take place after the seven-hour-and-20-minute school day ends or on weekends, or during school vacations (including summer). "We have everything from cooking to guitar to documentary filmmaking during a semester," says Michael Kucera, assistant principal of curriculum and professional development, describing the after-school electives available on the Golder campus. These after-school enrichment classes generally occur in either two one-hour blocks or one two-hour block per week. "But," Kucera adds, "students can also get enrichment credits for activities that are not affiliated with the school—from participating in anything from Drivers' Ed to boxing to summer programs at universities."

After-school enrichment activities can be initiated and run by school staff members, outside instructors, or even students themselves. "My friend created an environmentalist club," one student explains. "I like that I can get credit for being a part of something like that." Some student clubs count for enrichment credit, while others are more casual and do not provide students with credits. Administrators attribute the high level of student engagement and the lack of discipline problems during enrichment activities to the fact that students can create these electives around their own passions and self-select into classes and clubs that interest them.

Community service experiences are a central component of Golder College Prep's enrichment program. Every quarter, each student must complete five hours of community service. Students must switch service sites each quarter, in order to learn about a range of social issues, have a diverse set of experiences, and meet as many new contacts as possible. "This semester we're going to Nicaragua to build wells," says a senior at Golder. The community service requirement "is good for our transcripts" the student says. "And I've made good connections."

One particularly popular activity is ROTC. Currently, 120 students at Golder College Prep participate in ROTC training as an enrichment activity. "It's not about training to be in the military," says a student who is involved. "It's more about training on how to be a good citizen."

The school also partners with other organizations, such as "Summer of a Lifetime" and "Right Angle," to provide Golder's students with opportunities to leave Chicago for the summer to enroll in college courses. These summer programs count toward students' enrichment requirements and provide exposure to the academic, social, and cultural opportunities and challenges that exist in higher education. Such experiences are particularly important because over 90 percent of the students at Golder will be the first in their families to attend college. The school emphasizes that to truly prepare its low-income student body for college, it must not only provide strong academic programs, it must also expose students to the types of activities that students from more affluent backgrounds participate in during high school.



6

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

Use Time to Prepare Students for College and Career

The economic value of a college education has been well documented: Recent studies show that people between the ages of 25-34 who have college degrees earn between 74 and 79 percent more than their peers with only high school diplomas, and this difference in earning potential has been growing steadily for decades.[5] Yet, for low-income students, college completion is still too uncommon: Only 8.3 percent of low-income students across the country complete college by the time they are in their mid-20s.[6] Research also shows that low-income students face significant barriers to college completion that extend beyond academic preparation and include difficulties navigating the application and admission process; poor preparation for the independent and self-directed study required for college success; lack of clarity on the connection between college and career pathways; and an absence of important life-skills such as problem-solving, communication, and self-advocacy. High schools that are successful in preparing low-income students for success in college and careers must work to address these barriers, and many find the conventional school calendar inadequate for the types of programs and activities they need to offer their students.

The high-performing, expanded-time high schools in our study use time beyond the conventional school calendar to prepare their students for success in college and careers. Some schools, such as North Star Academy in Newark, New Jersey, add required classes like "college readiness," a multi-year course that familiarizes students with the college admissions process as well as the different types of colleges and universities they may choose to attend and their admission requirements. At KIPP Houston, in Texas, sophomores begin the college exploration process with a one-semester class that teaches them about different career opportunities and their educational requirements. The KIPP curriculum continues with year-long classes in the junior and senior years that prepare students for college entrance exams, support them through the college admissions process, and advise them on the types of social and financial challenges they may encounter in college.

An expanded day at Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy in Dallas, Texas, allows students—many of whom will be the first in their families to attend college—to earn up to 60 free college credits and learn about the college experience. Gilliam Collegiate Academy is one of more than 200 Early College High Schools nationwide. These schools blend high school with the first two years of college by helping students dual enroll in college courses and earn up to an associate's degree upon high school completion. While not all Early College High Schools offer an expanded school schedule, some, like Gilliam Collegiate, find additional time particularly advantageous for helping students to excel in college-level coursework and preparing them to navigate the academic and social challenges of college. (See sidebar: "Dual Enrollment at Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy")

More Time for College and Career

College Readiness

- College-level preparatory curriculum
- College visits and speakers
- Courses to prepare students for college life

+

Career Readiness

- Career exploration classes
- Job shadowing/ internships with local businesses
- Connecting with community organizations

Several schools in this National Center on Time & Learning study focus heavily on introducing students to career pathways. Twice each year, students at Brooklyn Generation School, in New York, trade in their traditional high school curriculum to take a four-week long "Intensive" course in law, technology, business, finance, medicine, or other careers. The school's 200-day school year allows the school to provide these Intensives without sacrificing the amount of time dedicated to core academic subjects. Throughout the month-long courses, students are learning about specific careers: "The idea is that students are reading and writing, they're doing research, and they're working towards presentations [in a specific field]. The students meet professionals in their workplace, they have people come in and speak to them about their college and career paths," explains Jonathan Spear, the co-founder of Brooklyn Generation School. (See sidebar: "Intensives at Brooklyn Generation School")

Similarly, at An Achievable Dream High School, in Newport News, Virginia, all tenth- and eleventh-grade students are required to take SAT prep courses, and tenth- eleventh- and twelfth-grade students participate in internships and job shadowing opportunities. (See sidebar: "College Readiness and 'What It Takes' at An Achievable Dream High School") "Our goal here is not merely to get students to pass state tests," says Lee Vreeland, the director of education and student services at Achievable Dream High School. "We want all of our students to be successful after their time here, whether it's in college or the workplace."

High-performing, expanded-time schools not only devote time to help their students get into college; they thoughtfully and strategically plan the types of opportunities and experiences from which their students will most benefit. Many of the schools in our study partner with a variety of outside organizations—such as colleges, businesses, and community non-profits, for-profits, and groups—to provide opportunities that match student interests. These schools also build a culture that continually communicates the importance of going to college. Moreover, in recognition of their student populations, many of these schools devote staff and resources toward supporting first-generation college entrants.

Partner with colleges, businesses, and community organizations

High-performing, expanded-time high schools find partner organizations that can fulfill the varying interests and goals of their students. An Achievable Dream partners with three universities located in various regions of Virginia—Old Dominion, Norfolk State, and Virginia Tech—to expose students to a variety of school sizes and specialties offered. The school also partners with diverse businesses in designing its work skills curriculum, called "What It Takes." Through What It Takes, students learn job skills, both in the classroom from

corporate partners who volunteer their time, and also outside the school, thanks to job shadowing and internship opportunities. "Our students get exposed to a variety of different career possibilities from the people who are actually working in those fields, while our partners get to interact with, and build relationships with, the great young men and women at our school," says Quentin Jackson, the assistant director of student services and athletics at An Achievable Dream. Similarly, Brooklyn Generation School partners with a number of colleges and businesses to provide its Intensives courses. Here a student taking a medical Intensive may have the opportunity to hear a guest lecture from a New York doctor, observe at a hospital, and then participate in internships at university hospitals. "Having partners who understand what our kids are interested in and can provide the experiences they may not be able to get in school makes our school special," says Jonathan Spear of Brooklyn Generation School.

Build a school culture committed to college completion

A school culture that encourages and expects all students to attend college is crucial for students who may be the first in their families to attend college. Most schools in this study send the repeated message to students from the time they begin school that college is both possible and the critical next step in their lives.

At KIPP Houston, the field house is decorated with names of KIPP graduates alongside the pennants of the colleges into which they enrolled. Banners throughout KIPP Houston High School also urge students to "Climb the Mountain" to college, and students earn certain freedoms throughout the year meant to mimic those they will have once they are in college. At YES Prep North Central, also located in Houston, the importance of college is highlighted even before the first day of school. During a summer orientation week, new students hear from upperclassmen about the rigors of school and the expectations of becoming college-ready. Throughout the school year, YES Prep schedules a weekly 15-minute homeroom period to reinforce the college-bound culture.

Support students who will be first-generation college students

Many of the students enrolled at high-performing, expanded-time schools will be the first in their families to attend college. In recognition of the diverse needs of many first-generation college students, a number of high schools have created supports for these students to pave the way to college. Schools implement programs that help students navigate the college application and selection process and identify financial aid.

Advisors meet with students and their families to discuss college life near and far from home. At KIPP Houston, all seniors are required to take a year-long college guidance course that helps them choose colleges, write essays, and prepare for college life. The school also dedicates one staff member to assist students and families in applying to and selecting colleges. An Achievable Dream provides a number of similar supports for its students. In addition to partnerships with three Virginia universities, the school also brings in college speakers, sends students to visit campuses, and helps families complete financial aid forms.

Keys to Success

- Partner with colleges, business, and community organizations
- Build a school culture committed to college completion
- Support students who will be first-generation college students

College Readiness and "What It Takes" *at* An Achievable Dream High School / Newport News, VA

An Achievable Dream High School

Principal: Marylin Sinclair-White

School schedule: 8:10am–4:10pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 85 min/day and 30 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: 9–12

Number of students: 188

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 83%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Virginia Standards of Learning Test in 2010

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 93% (+2%)

Math: 92% (+6%)

An Achievable Dream High School (AAD) opened its doors in 1992 under the belief "that all children can learn and succeed regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds; and that education can break the cycle of poverty." The school uses an expanded schedule—both more time each day and more days in the school year than surrounding schools—to deliver a rigorous college preparatory curriculum and expose students to career opportunities and workplace skills. "Expanded learning gives us the option to declare: "NO Failure," says Lee Vreeland, the director of education and student services at An Achievable Dream. "We are always open, so there is time to ensure that all succeed." Though An Achievable Dream is located in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Newport News, Virginia, inside the building, administrators and teachers hold students to the same expectations as those attending wealthier suburban schools: Students will be ready for college and the workplace upon graduation.

We needed additional time to ensure that our kids could catch up," states Vreeland. In the earlier grades, the additional time spent on core academics not only helps students below grade level to catch up, it also prepares them for college-level classes in later grades, including AP Calculus, advanced online courses, and dual enrollment courses. In preparation for college entrance exams, tenth- and eleventh-grade students take SAT math and verbal classes each day, familiarizing themselves with test items as well as its format.

The school is so focused on preparing students for post-secondary success that it created a unique curriculum called "What it Takes" to teach workplace skills. "We sat down with corporations and asked them what it was that they wanted young people to come into work with," says Quentin Jackson, AAD's assistant director of student services. "They all came back to us and said it was the soft skills—things like working with people and how to act in a professional manner." Throughout the school year, students take two to three What it Takes classes each week, alternating with non-core academic classes (e.g. driver's education and Spanish). These classes are taught by corporate partners, and the relationships built between them and AAD students often lead to internship and job shadowing opportunities for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students; approximately 90 percent of juniors and seniors are involved in an internship or job shadowing experience at some point during the school year.

Because many of the school's students will be the first in their family to attend college, AAD also supports families as they navigate the college application process. Once students identify potential schools, AAD staff members read through every application, including essays, before they are sent off. Upon acceptance, the school assists families in completing financial aid forms and finding sources of financial aid, including offering scholarships directly from An Achievable Dream. Through partnerships developed with three Virginia universities, AAD graduates accepted into Old Dominion, Norfolk State, or Virginia Tech receive a financial package that includes tuition, room, and board. "We communicate to all our students that they can go to college," says Vreeland, "Through our academics, SAT prep, the help we provide students during the application process, and the financial supports we're able to offer, we try to help our students achieve that goal."

"Our ultimate goal and the mission of An Achievable Dream is to use education to break the cycle of poverty. We are committed to doing whatever we can to close the achievement gap and ensure that our students contribute positively to society during their time here and afterward."

Lee Vreeland, Director of Education and Student Services, An Achievable Dream High School

Dual Enrollment *at* Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy / Dallas, TX

Kathlyn J. Gilliam Collegiate Academy

Principal: Gayle Smith

School schedule: 8:00am–4:00pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 60 min/day

Student Population
Grades served: 9–11
Number of students: 300
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 81%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 100% (+13%)

Math: 92% (+28%)

Kathlyn J. Gilliam Collegiate Academy, located in Dallas, Texas, is an Early College High School –one of more than 200 schools across the nation that prepares students for the rigors of college by dual enrolling them in college courses starting in the ninth grade and helping them earn up to an associate's degree upon high school completion. Students attending the school, most of whom will be the first in their families to attend college, are able to earn up to 60 college credits tuition free by the time they graduate.

Collegiate Academy has partnered with Cedar Valley College, a community college in southern Dallas County, for its dual enrollment program. Because classes at Cedar Valley College are 90 minutes long, Collegiate faculty designed their class schedules to accommodate the longer periods and built in additional supports during an extended school day to ensure that their students were able to handle the challenging class load. As Gayle Smith, the principal at Collegiate Academy explains, "The expanded time mostly allows for more support for the high school and college academics...It allows us to offer more college classes and for the dual enrollment to work more effectively because the longer blocks match up with the college classes... Students can attend college classes without missing parts of high school class blocks, because they are all the same length."

On Mondays and Wednesdays, Cedar Valley College professors come to Collegiate Academy and teach six, college-credit bearing courses to the ninth- and tenth-grade students. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, eleventh and twelfth graders travel to Cedar Valley College's campus, via bus, and attend college courses alongside college students. While students in the ninth grade start with a fixed eight college credit-hour curriculum, students in grades ten through twelve have more flexibility to take a variety of college courses.

Students at Collegiate Academy receive academic support throughout the week to keep them progressing academically. The first support system takes place during the students' lunch period, which ranges in length from 40 to 70 minutes. During this long lunch period, teachers meet with students whom they believe require additional help. Students, meanwhile, are encouraged to take advantage of this time to seek out help if they feel they need it. Collegiate Academy also has an "off-track" after-school tutoring program to ensure that no students fall behind. Each grade level has a designated "off-track" tutoring day, and students who have missed a class or an assignment, or who are otherwise lagging, are required to attend an hour-long tutorial in order to fulfill all of their requirements and keep pace with the curriculum.

With high academic expectations, an expanded schedule, and built-in academic supports, Principal Smith hopes to instill a strong work ethic in her students as they prepare for college. "We are trying to train them—when you are on campus at college, go to the library, go somewhere and do your studying, and then you can have the rest of your time to socialize and have fun. But get your work done first before you go home."

Intensives *at* Brooklyn Generation School / Brooklyn, NY

Brooklyn Generation School

Principal: Terri Grey

School schedule: 9:00am–3:50pm

Early release: 9:00am–2:15pm (Wed.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 20 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: 9–12

Number of students: 320

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 81%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the New York State Standardized Test[7]

(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 70% (+8%)

Math: 54% (+5%)

Brooklyn Generation is revolutionizing the school calendar for both students and adults. Without adding time to teachers' work schedules, the school has expanded the school year by four weeks to include a total of 200 eight-hour days. To lengthen the school year, Brooklyn Generation, located in Brooklyn, New York, hires additional teachers and staggers the schedules of all faculty members.

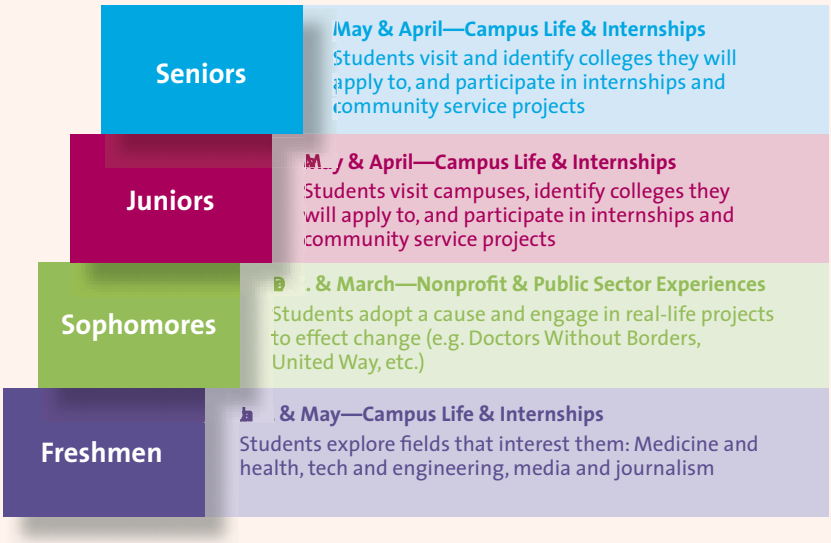
Throughout the longer school year, students at Brooklyn Generation receive a rigorous academic education along with a unique "Intensives" curriculum that exposes them to college and career opportunities. In 2004, Brooklyn Generation's innovative model earned them the Echoing Green "Emerging World Social Innovations" award, and the school's founders are planning to expand their model elsewhere in the country.

Over two separate four-week periods during the school year, each Brooklyn Generation student chooses two Intensives courses that align the school's academic content to college and the workplace. Over these four weeks, the student day is focused only on the Intensive they've chosen, so that students can develop their interests in a career field and learn more about college at the same time. For instance, Michele Hill, the school's culinary arts Intensive teacher, structures her ninth-grade course around a restaurant competition, including creating a business plan. "The class is based on the television show Restaurant Impossible," Hill describes. In just four weeks, she continues, "They're responsible for all components of opening the business. They have to determine marketing, advertising. They're responsible for developing a website, and they're totally responsible for the types of dishes that their restaurant will serve. They're responsible for creating journal entries and understanding financial statements." Students in Hill's class also take field trips to nearby colleges with culinary arts programs, and visit restaurants in Manhattan to learn from industry practitioners in their workplace.

Students in each grade choose from different sets of Intensives. Though each Intensive incorporates a college and career focus, those offered in ninth and tenth grade are more career-oriented, while eleventh and twelfth grade Intensives place greater emphasis on college.

The Intensives are designed and taught by a group of teachers who instruct exclusively in the Intensives program, spending the school year teaching these classes to different groups of students. Intensives teachers meet frequently with core academic teachers to align content, learn about the students they will teach, and identify skills to reinforce during their Intensive.

The Intensive program, with its designated teaching corps, has the added benefit of enabling substantial amounts of professional development and planning time for core academic teachers. While students are in their four-week Intensives, core academic teachers are out of the building, enjoying a three-week vacation, and then for one week participating in planning sessions with other teachers in their grade level.



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College Preparatory

7

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

Use Time to Continuously Strengthen Instruction

Research demonstrates that teacher quality is the most significant school-related factor influencing student achievement and that the time schools invest in building teacher skills, when used well, can meaningfully improve student outcomes.[8] In fact, building teacher skills takes time: The hard work of refining lesson plans, analyzing student data to identify areas for improvement, and sharing instructional strategies requires that teachers and administrators have sufficient time to meet and work together. An expanded school schedule affords the time needed for this type of collaboration.

The high-performing, expanded-time schools examined as part of this study devote significantly more time to teacher development than do conventional schools. More than one-third of the schools in this study reported scheduling fifteen or more days of professional development and planning—days when teachers are in school but students are not. While the number of such "teacher days" varies from district to district, the total rarely exceeds five or six in districts with conventional schedules. Along with the additional teacher days, many schools in this study arrange schedules and staffing when school is in session in order to ensure regular opportunities for teachers to meet with one another and with coaches and administrators as well. While the school day at North Star Academy in Newark, New Jersey, is eight hours long, teachers only teach four one-hour classes each day, allowing time for meetings with peers and coaches as well as in-depth lesson planning. (See sidebar: "Instructional Leadership at North Star Academy") Brooklyn Generation School, a district high school in New York, provides two hours of collaboration daily for its teachers by forming two different sets of teaching staff. The first group, called "foundations" teachers, lead the school's foundation courses, which include a 90-minute humanities class and a 90-minute math class. The second group, "studio" teachers, lead the school's studio classes, which are essentially elective classes that include science, visual and performing arts, physical education among others. Each group of teachers is able to meet while the other group is teaching.

"Our staffing strategy isn't necessarily to bring in the best of the best. Our strategy is to bring in teachers who want to become better and train them to become the best of the best."

Michael Mann, Head of School, North Star Academy

Another strategy expanded-time schools use to find time for teacher development is to schedule weekly or bi-weekly early-release days, when students are dismissed early and teachers have the opportunity to work together on instructional strategies. Because students are in school more hours during the week, scheduling an early-release day can provide time for teachers to meet without cutting into important instructional time for students. In fact, 23 of the 30 schools included in this study schedule a weekly early-release day for teachers to receive professional development and collaborate with their colleagues. One school in New Orleans Recovery School District, Arthur Ashe Charter School, offers two hours of weekly professional development time, focused on strengthening instructional practices or building school culture, after student dismissal every Friday. Teacher surveys conducted at Arthur Ashe show a high level of satisfaction with these teacher development opportunities. On Wednesdays, at Williamsburg Collegiate in Brooklyn, New York, students are released early and teachers spend four hours in professional development sessions and grade and content level team meetings.

Some schools also devote several weeks of the summer to professional development and planning. At Rocketship Mateo Sheedy, in San Jose, California, teachers return to school three weeks before students. During this period, teachers engage in discussions and training on school culture, classroom management, general school protocols and procedures, along with specific school-wide instructional practices such as guided reading. In Newark, New Jersey, at North Star Academy, teachers also return to school three weeks early and new teachers arrive even earlier. Summer professional development time is focused on refining the implementation of common instructional approaches, including the school's structured approach to lesson-planning.

However, while the amount of time invested in teacher development across these high-performing schools is noteworthy, the schools emphasize that the real key to their success is how they use this time. Without a coherent plan for effectively using time allotted for professional development, grade/department meetings, and classroom observations, these activities can fall short of their intended purposes. In the absence of a plan, professional development courses can lack relevance and practicality, teacher meetings can lose focus and become diverted by issues of behavior or logistics, and observations can be too infrequent or disjointed to provide the important feedback

teachers need to grow. The high-performing, expanded-time schools examined in this study attribute their success to a laser-like focus on continuously strengthening instruction. Regardless of how they organize the time, three specific keys to success emerge from observing these schools: 1) Teachers are observed frequently and receive frequent feedback; 2) Time for teacher collaboration and professional development is thoughtfully planned and designed around a small set of clear goals for instructional improvement; and 3) Teachers have the expectation they will receive feedback and are committed to continuous improvement in their teaching.

Provide teachers with frequent feedback and coaching

Principals and other administrators at high-performing, expanded-time schools commit to delivering clear and focused instructional leadership through frequent observations and feedback. At North Star Academy, each teacher is paired with an instructional coach—typically a master teacher, administrator, or other veteran teacher—who observes and meets with the partnered teacher once each week. New teachers and struggling teachers are observed and meet with coaches more frequently. Similarly, teachers at Amistad Academy in New Haven, Connecticut, meet with their instructional coach twice each week—a classroom observation followed by a meeting to debrief. (See sidebar: "Essentials of Effective Instruction at Amistad Academy Middle School") At these two schools, additional time allows for both observations and meetings to take place without sacrificing the amount of instruction students receive. Jacob Hiatt Magnet School in Worcester, Massachusetts has configured schedules to allow for a unique peer observation protocol to share effective instructional practices, modeled after medical rounds. (See sidebar: "Collaborating to Improve Instruction at Jacob Hiatt Magnet School")

Focus on a small set of improvement goals

At each of these schools, teachers and administrators emphasize that the time for coaching, observation, and feedback is effective because it focuses on a limited number of clear goals and on improving just a few specific instructional practices. At North Star Academy, each teacher develops a small set of goals, which are clearly identified at the top of a lesson plan, in collaboration with his/her instructional leader. For example, a teacher may be working on better engaging students in discussions or on better pacing of lessons. At Hiatt, the faculty and school leadership focus on three specific instructional practices in their meetings with one another and in their peer observations. Teacher development at Amistad Academy is aligned to ten "Essentials of Effective Instruction," developed by the greater Achievement First network. Twice each year, all Amistad teachers attend professional development trainings delivered by Achievement First teachers and staff, each intended to strengthen one of the ten essentials. Additionally, Amistad educators choose one of the essentials as their school-wide goal each year. Finally, instructional coaches use a rubric organized around the ten essentials to provide feedback to teachers after observations.

Create a culture that values feedback and continuous improvement

Constructive feedback is not easy to give, nor is it always easy to receive. In schools, just like in many work environments, administrators and instructional leaders will hesitate to offer detailed comments on how professional practice can be improved. Educators working at the high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study recognize that teaching excellence depends on creating a culture where feedback is expected and where the focus is always on how to improve. "Even the best teachers are observed and get feedback, because everyone can get better. We are never satisfied here," explains Eric Widmeyer, an eighth-grade history teacher at Amistad Academy. "We are always looking for some way to improve our teaching. That's what makes teaching here exciting. It's hard, but I know I am improving."

Keys to Success

- Provide teachers with frequent feedback and coaching
- Focus on a small set of improvement goals
- Create a culture that values feedback and continuous improvement

Collaborating to Improve Instruction *at* Jacob Hiatt Magnet School / Worcester, MA

Jacob Hiatt Magnet School

Principal: Patricia E. Gaudette

School schedule: 7:50am–3:35pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 80 min/day

Student Population
Grades served: PK–6
Number of students: 456
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 71%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 59% (+14%)

Math: 59% (+17%)

While many schools schedule time for teachers to collaborate, Jacob Hiatt Magnet School, in Worcester, Massachusetts, stands out for its efforts to organize all collaboration and professional development time around its school-wide instructional focus, which concentrates on improving students' critical reading skills. After establishing this focus, Hiatt's expanded school schedule was structured to allow more time for writing and literacy. Meanwhile, the school invested significant time in their teachers, acknowledging that for instruction to improve, teachers need more time to collaborate, look at student work, and analyze data, as well as continue to refine their instructional practice. (Also see earlier sidebar: "School-wide Instructional Focus at Jacob Hiatt Magnet School")

In the process of determining a school-wide instructional focus, Hiatt's faculty and leadership identified three "School-Wide Best Practices" that all teachers would implement every day in every classroom and they developed a unique peer observation system so teachers could share effective instructional practices continually with one another.

"The particularly effective system we have used to strengthen instruction in these three practice areas is the professional development practice called 'rounds.' It is modeled after the practice used in the medical profession to improve patient care," Assistant Principal Mary Labuski describes. At Hiatt, a round engages small groups of teachers in understanding the teaching-learning process at work within a particular classroom. The round is pre-arranged, and teachers are identified to participate either as an observer or as a host teacher. Each observing group receives an orientation regarding the classroom activity from the host teacher, observes and/or participates in some well-defined way, and reflects and discusses the lesson afterward. Questions are developed to guide the post-round reflection. Class coverage arranged by the principal enables Hiatt teachers to participate in rounds periodically throughout the school year.

"When we started using T-charts as graphic organizers to teach writing we needed to help teachers learn to integrate them into their lessons. We did a lot of rounds with 2-3 teachers who were skilled at using these organizers and that really helped us improve our practice. Some teachers said 'Oh now I get it.' It was sort of an 'aha moment' for them," Labuski recounts.

Jacob Hiatt School-wide Best Practices

Core instructional time will be dedicated to work on reading and responding to a variety of texts in every classroom, every day.

This instruction will include the use of T-charts[9] as school-wide graphic organizers.

This instruction will include the use of the U-N-P-A-C-K the question strategy.

This instruction will include modeled writing by every teacher...in every classroom...every day.

Essentials of Effective Instruction *at*
Amistad Academy Middle School /
New Haven, CT

Amistad Academy Middle School

Principal: Matt Taylor

School schedule: 7:30am–5:00pm

Early release: 7:30am–1:00pm (Fri.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 180 min/day

Student Population
Grades served: 5–8
Number of students: 295
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 77%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Connecticut Mastery Test in 2010 *(difference compared to surrounding district)*

ELA: 78% (+14%)

Math: 93% (+22%)

Amistad Academy Middle School, founded in 1999, serves students from some of New Haven's poorest neighborhoods, who frequently enter the school achieving well below grade level. Yet each year, Amistad students consistently outperform students from both the surrounding district schools and the state on the Connecticut Mastery Test in English language arts and math. Based on Amistad's success, school leaders created Achievement First (AF), a network of 19 charter schools in Connecticut and New York that have replicated the Amistad model.

Early in the school's development, leaders at Amistad Academy realized that building a cadre of excellent teachers was paramount to meeting their goals of closing the achievement gap and preparing the school's mostly low-income student body for success in college and beyond. To this end, leaders honed in on the instructional practices they believed were essential components of effective instruction. This list of key practices has been expanded and refined and is now referred to across the AF network as the "Essentials of Effective Instruction." The Essentials encompass 24 elements, organized into 10 categories, and define what high-quality instruction should look like at AF schools.

Along with the Essentials, a system of instructional coaching was created to support teacher development. Each teacher is assigned an instructional coach. The coaching team is made up of the school's academic deans, the principal, and a few master teachers, all of whom teach at least one class. "One of Achievement First's values is that everyone, including the principal, has a foot in the classroom," says Matt Taylor, the school leader at Amistad Academy. Each teacher is observed by their coach every week, using the Essentials to guide the observation. The coach then meets with the teacher during his/her planning period to exchange feedback, and the pair work collaboratively to determine what element of the Essentials needs improvement and the specific strategies that will be used to strengthen instruction in this area. Once a plan has been created, the coach observes the teacher in the classroom and the coach and teacher meet again to debrief and assess the teacher's mastery of the strategies. As the teacher makes progress the plan is further modified to focus on a different element of the 10 Essentials. "The coaching program that we have makes people feel extremely satisfied with their work," explains School Leader Taylor. "They feel like they're growing because of the level of coaching they're getting."

To ensure coaching is highly effective it is supported at both the network and school level. Achievement First provides two to three days of training for coaches each year. During the training coaches learn how to use the Essentials to guide their observations and provide feedback. At the school level, the principal acts as the "coach of coaches." The principal participates in co-observations with coaches and meets with them regularly to discuss the progress teachers are making and how their coaching can be improved. According to Taylor, the principal of Amistad Academy, "This rigorous system and the clear expectations we have regarding the practices we want to see in each classroom has really contributed to our students' academic success."

Achievement First:
Essentials of Effective Instruction

1. Great AIMS
2. Exit Ticket/Assessment of Student Mastery of the AIMS
3. Most Effective and Efficient Strategies to Teach the AIMS
4. Modeling/Guided Practice (I/We or We)
5. Sustained, Successful, Independent Practice (You)
6. Classroom Culture
7. Student Engagement
8. Academic Rigor
9. Cumulative Review
10. Differentiation

Instructional Leadership *at* North Star Academy / Newark, NJ

North Star Academy

Principal: Michael Mann

School schedule: 7:45am–3:45pm

Early release: 7:45am–2:15pm (Thurs.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 70 min/day and 11 days/year

Student Population
Grades served: 9–12
Number of students: 204
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 76%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 92% (+33%)

Math: 100% (+52%)

Students at North Star Academy routinely achieve proficiency rates of 100 percent on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge. The school's uncompromising emphasis on strengthening the skills of its teachers is one partial reason for the student's success. Its system of instructional leadership and coaching is one of the distinguishing features of the school. "We have very high standards for our teachers but we don't just try to go out and hire superstars. We work really hard with every teacher to turn them into excellent teachers," asserts Michael Mann, North Star's head of school.

To build teacher skills, school administrators appoint eight "instructional leaders" from their staff. The instructional leaders include the six department chairs and two additional teachers who have demonstrated excellence in the classroom. Each teacher in the building is assigned an instructional leader who is charged with supporting the assigned teacher's development. Instructional leaders, who also carry a teaching load, provide assigned teachers with a minimum of three hours of supervision and support each week. Support includes a one-hour observation at the beginning of the week, a one-hour meeting later in the week to provide feedback on the observation, and co-planning for the next week's lessons. New teachers or struggling teachers may receive up to six hours of observation and coaching per week. "We don't characterize this relationship as 'collaboration.' It is leadership. When leaders give instructions they are not just providing collegial advice, they are directing the growth of teacher's skills," explains Mann.

Every teacher in the school—even veteran and master teachers—work with their instructional leader to identify areas for improvement. "The area I really needed to work on was pacing. I was taking too long on certain activities in my lesson, and I wasn't getting to some of the parts I had planned for the end. My instructional leader helped me to time stamp my lessons so that I was clear where I wanted to be at each point," says Steve Chiger, a journalism and English teacher at North Star. When a teacher is struggling in a specific area, he/she may be asked to observe another teacher's lesson, or the instructional leader may model a teaching strategy by co-teaching a lesson or stepping in to teach a component of a larger lesson.

What is most distinctive about North Star Academy's approach is the intentionality and forethought that have gone into the creation of the instructional leadership system. Instructional leaders receive coaching on how to support teachers, and they are required to apply a number of school-wide templates to guide their work. The school provides training and protocols on how to conduct an observation, how to structure teacher meetings, how to give feedback on an observation, and how to set specific development goals. Videotapes of effective meetings between instructional leaders and teachers are shown to model desired approaches and behaviors.

To allow time for these vital meetings, teachers at North Star Academy typically teach only four out of seven class periods per day. "These meetings take time," explains Juliann Harris, ninth and tenth grade academy leader, "and they are an important part of our work to make sure our students receive an excellent education."

8

Successful, Expanded-Time Schools...

Use Time to Relentlessly Assess, Analyze, and Respond to Student Data

Over the past two decades, the standards-based reform and accountability movements have sparked a dramatic increase in the amount of data collected in schools. Supplementing information gleaned from annual standardized tests, some schools now collect benchmark assessment data to predict standardized test performance; teachers collect data in classrooms to monitor student progress; and districts invest in "data dashboards" and other computer programs to store and analyze vast amounts of student data. Among educators, there is now consensus that school improvement efforts should incorporate the collection of data to assess student progress and inform instruction.

While efforts to collect and analyze such data have consequently become more widespread, many schools are still not using data regularly or effectively to inform instruction and target teaching towards student strengths and weaknesses. One possible reason is that data use in schools takes time. Schools not only need time to develop and implement periodic assessments, they also need follow-up time to analyze results and develop strategies to improve or modify instruction. The typical school calendar rarely affords the time needed for regular and in-depth discussions about data. In contrast, the high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study demonstrate not only how schools devote the time needed to data analysis, they also reveal the pivotal role data analysis plays in driving decisions about time use.

16

Number of high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study that schedule "Data Days"—where teachers are freed from their teaching duties—to analyze data

All 30 schools in our study structure time every quarter, week, and/or day to enable thorough data analysis; the expanded school schedule allows them to do so without taking away from their rich and rigorous curriculum. For example, each quarter, teachers at Griffith Elementary School, in Phoenix, Arizona, review benchmark and other reading assessments to identify standards to re-teach and design individual supports for students. At Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, teachers typically spend one to two hours each week reviewing data collected from weekly assessments as well as daily "exit tickets"—a small number of problems or questions students complete before leaving each class in order to demonstrate mastery of the lesson. (See sidebar: "Data Analysis Tools and Protocols at Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus")

Effective data use also requires time in class to assess students. The schools in our National Center on Time & Learning study not only allocate time for teachers to analyze data, they also apportion significant amounts of time to conduct student assessments. Exit tickets, for example, often require the last five minutes of class to administer, and teachers must plan their lessons carefully to leave time for these short quizzes. Teachers also need to devote class time at periodic intervals in the year to administer benchmark assessments. Of course, schools need to balance this time for testing with high-quality engaging instruction so that assessment doesn't take precedence over teaching, which suggests yet another reason more class time is so important.

To make certain that the time allotted for assessment, data analysis, and data-driven planning is highly effective, the schools in this study employ three key tactics:

Build school-wide commitment to data use

Throughout the hallways at many of the schools we visited for this study, assessment data is displayed to celebrate student progress and remind everyone there of shared performance goals. "Being a data driven organization is a key tenet to who we are," says Daniel Bell, director of operations at Mastery Shoemaker. Administrators continuously communicate the importance of data as a tool to improve instruction and ensure that every student is receiving the academic support needed to succeed. As a result, teachers are comfortable sharing and discussing data. "Our leadership team has always been very open with our data," says Shelby Scheideman, the principal at Aspire Port City (PCA), in Stockton, California. "We want to show our staff that we all have areas we can improve on, but we need to look at the data to first identify those things." At PCA, even students are involved in data analysis; twice a year, students lead parent-teacher conferences, setting two measurable goals with teachers on reading, writing, math, and personal growth. (See sidebar: "Cycle of Inquiry at Aspire Port City Academy")

Provide teachers with tools that simplify real-time data analysis

Analyzing and planning around data can add a genuine burden to a teacher's busy schedule. For this reason, along with carving out time for teachers to devote to data-driven activities, a number of schools in this study also have implemented tools that simplify data analysis, allowing teachers to spend their time

strategizing around data rather than crunching numbers. The Aspire network of schools in California has created a computer-based data portal for its teachers. The network portal allows teachers to compare their students' performances to a set of performance predictions based on previous scores and to the scores of other students at Aspire Schools. "We can look at the data and immediately understand which students are struggling and which students are performing above expectations. We can respond quickly to what the data tell us, changing the way we are teaching, or reviewing certain topics that students aren't understanding, or even pulling certain kids for extra help when they need it," says Larrise Lane, a second grade teacher at Aspire Port City Academy.

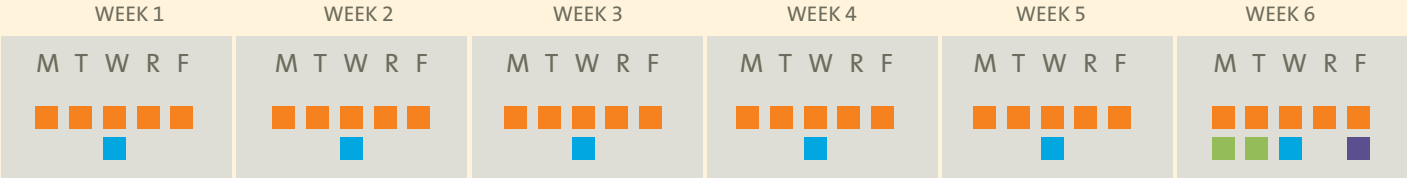
A similar portal created by the Mastery Schools network provides predictive student growth data, indicating whether students are making progress toward specific goals. At Rocketship Mateo Sheedy, in San Jose, California, students receive a daily period of self-directed English language arts and math practice through adaptive software in the school's Learning Lab. Student performance then feeds into a data portal, called the "Teacher Dashboard," which is updated each day. "The information from Teacher Dashboard tells me how many questions students completed," explains Maricela Guerrero, the principal at Rocketship, "and it tells me the accuracy so that I can follow up in the classroom the next day or make sure I re-teach something."

Create protocols that support teachers in planning around data use

High-performing, expanded-time schools establish protocols to ensure that data analysis conducted produces real impacts on student learning. As many as 16 of the schools we studied hold "Data Days"—specific days on which teachers are freed from their typical teaching responsibilities and gather to look at data. Data Days at Mastery Shoemaker are held quarterly after benchmark assessments, when students are not in school. During these periods, structured time is given for staff to meet in grade and content level, as well as across schools. Achievement First schools in Connecticut and New York also meet four days each year—without students—to discuss data and share instructional practices after each benchmark assessment. "The whole network of schools comes together," says Matt Taylor, School Leader at Amistad Academy, an Achievement First school located in New Haven. "Schools reflect on interim assessments, which are developed by Achievement First. For instance, every sixth-grade math teacher from each of the schools will meet, reflecting on the sixth-grade test and planning for the next six weeks of instruction together." At Aspire Port City, weekly, grade-level meetings follow a "Cycle of Inquiry" process. During these meetings, teachers share weekly assessment data and instructional strategies through a reflection sheet. "We look at every student and make sure they each learn what they need to learn," says Sokheap Heng, a fifth-grade teacher at the school. "The time we get in planning with our colleagues and filling out the reflection sheets regularly lets us know that as teachers, we need to be looking at data and planning our instruction around it every day."

More Time for Data Analysis

Typical Six-Week Cycle at High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools



Daily
Prep and teacher collaboration to review daily work

Weekly
Grade meetings to analyze weekly assessments

Quarterly
Data analysis days after benchmarks

Yearly
Review data to plan for upcoming year

Keys to Success

- Build school-wide commitment to data use
- Provide teachers with tools that simplify real-time data analysis
- Create protocols that support teachers in planning around data use

Cycle of Inquiry *at* Aspire Port City Academy / Stockton, CA

Aspire Port City Academy

Principal: Shelby Scheideman

School schedule: 8:00am–3:20pm

Early release: 8:00am–12:40pm (Wed.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 60 min/day and 3 days/year

Student Population

Grades served: K–5

Number of students: 405

Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 82%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the California State Test in 2010 *(difference compared to surrounding district)*

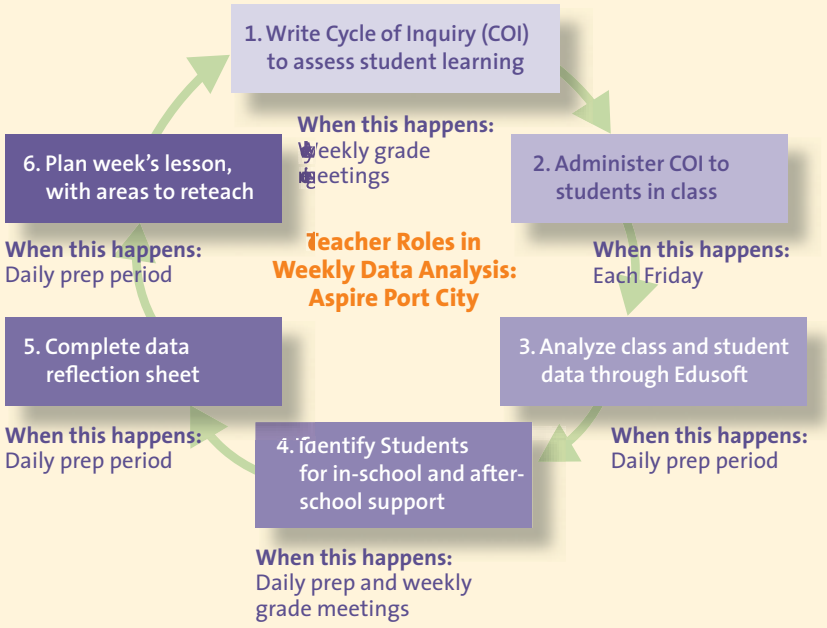
ELA: 67% (+33%)

Math: 84% (+40%)

At Aspire Port City Academy (PCA), data analysis is a dynamic weekly process that results in immediate action—triggering interventions or re-teaching of specific standards—and the expanded school day has afforded teachers the time to carry out this process. "Data is an integral part of this school," states Shelby Scheideman, PCA's principal. "We work to ensure that our teachers have the resources with which to gather, analyze, and use data to drive our decisions around student needs." Says Sokheap Heng, a fifth-grade teacher at PCA, "Each Friday, all students take weekly tests we create during our common planning time. We call them our 'Cycle of Inquiry,' or COI, assessments."

Once each week, grade-level teachers hold an hour-long meeting to create COIs and analyze data from the previous week's test. In preparation for these meetings, teachers complete a "Cycle of Inquiry Post-Test Data Reflection," which contains information including: the number of students who scored 80 percent or above on each standard covered on the COI; student scores along five different performance "bands," or quintiles comparing each student to his/her classmates; challenges students faced; and concepts to focus on and students to target. Through these meetings, teachers identify students for supports both within and outside the school day. Additionally, PCA teachers rely on Edusoft, an outside assessment management tool, for further data analysis. Using the data generated by Edusoft, alongside insights generated by the Post Test Data Reflection and conversations with colleagues, teachers create "small groups" within the classroom to target individual student needs. Small group instruction can take many forms, including: learning centers (students rotating to different work stations), student-led problem solving (students teaching the class to solve problems), and reading/writing workshops (teacher-led, small-group instruction and independent practice). Students who require additional help are assigned to after-school tutoring, where time is structured much like a typical classroom lesson.

Cultivating a culture that emphasizes and values the power of data to drive instruction is just as important as the tools and protocols that facilitate data analysis. At PCA, that culture begins at the top and extends all the way to students. "Our leadership team has always been very open with data," says Principal Scheideman. "It's not just the good data that we share. We want to show we all have areas we can improve on." Students at PCA are also encouraged to become invested in their performance and growth on COIs as well as other assessments, including benchmarks and the California State Test (CST). Twice a year, students lead parent-teacher conferences, setting measurable goals for personal growth. Students track their performance and revisit these goals throughout the year and their success is celebrated both in the classroom and throughout the school.



Data Analysis Tools and Protocols *at* Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus / Philadelphia, PA

Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus

Principal: Sharif El-Mekki

School schedule: 8:00am–4:00pm

Early Release: 8:30am–1:30pm (Wed.)

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 60 min/day and 7 days/year

Student Population
Grades served: 7–12
Number of students: 679
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 71%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 64% (+10%)

Math: 82% (+41%)

Based in Philadelphia, Mastery Charter Schools are receiving national attention as a model for turning around low-performing public schools. Government leaders, celebrities, and national news outlets have highlighted the impressive results at Mastery schools, including Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus. Many of the students begin their time at Mastery Shoemaker several grade levels behind in both reading and math. Therefore, Mastery Shoemaker stresses a highly data-driven approach to identifying both student skill levels and the supports needed to get them to grade level and on the path towards college.

Data permeates Mastery Shoemaker's classrooms and hallways. Teachers rely on data each day, and they establish protocols to collect and analyze data throughout the year. "Our teachers are constantly collecting student data," says Daniel Bell, director of operations at Mastery Shoemaker. At the end of each academic period, students fill out "exit tickets"—a short list of questions that gives teachers a sense of what students learned during class. In some Mastery Shoemaker classrooms, teachers incorporate handheld devices to track student responses and determine whether students have learned certain concepts. Teachers at Mastery schools also create and administer weekly assessments to gauge student progress. Bell summarizes, "The amount of time we analyze and utilize data is hard to believe. We have benchmarks, predictor tests, end of year tests, and weekly assessments that drive our instruction. Teachers spend at least two hours each week looking at data. For many of our teachers, it's even more than that."

Along with such regular weekly assessments, Mastery Shoemaker and other network schools also administer benchmark assessments, created by the Mastery network, every six weeks. After each benchmark assessment, all Mastery schools hold "Data Days," giving every teacher a full day to grade, analyze, and plan around benchmark assessments. To facilitate benchmark analysis, Mastery also uses prior student performance data to predict growth, and then designates each student as "exceeding," "meeting," or "below" expected growth after each assessment. "The teacher reports are a really great way for me to see what trends are emerging in my classroom, what my students are not getting, and which individual students need support from me or a tutor," says Kate Delpriore, an algebra teacher at Mastery Shoemaker. It's a great tool to celebrate success, too. I can show a student their score and tell them that they're exceeding their expected growth."

Mastery schools also administer assessments to predict student performance on Pennsylvania's standardized test and end-of-year testing to determine growth in math and reading. Each day, teachers have one or two planning periods to analyze and use data to inform instruction. "I don't make a decision unless I have data to back it," maintains School Leader Matt Troha. "That's the culture at our school because it makes sense; we trust the data and believe in data strongly. We use it to make every decision."

Data Displays to Keep Students and Teachers Focused *at* Matthew J. Kuss Middle School / Fall River, MA

Matthew J. Kuss Middle School

Principal: Nancy Mullen

School schedule: 7:15am–3:35pm

Additional time compared to surrounding district: 120 min/day

Student Population
Grades served: 6–8
Number of students: 650
Qualify for free/reduced lunch: 84%

Students Scoring At or Above Proficient on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System Test in 2010
(difference compared to surrounding district)

ELA: 57% (+4%)

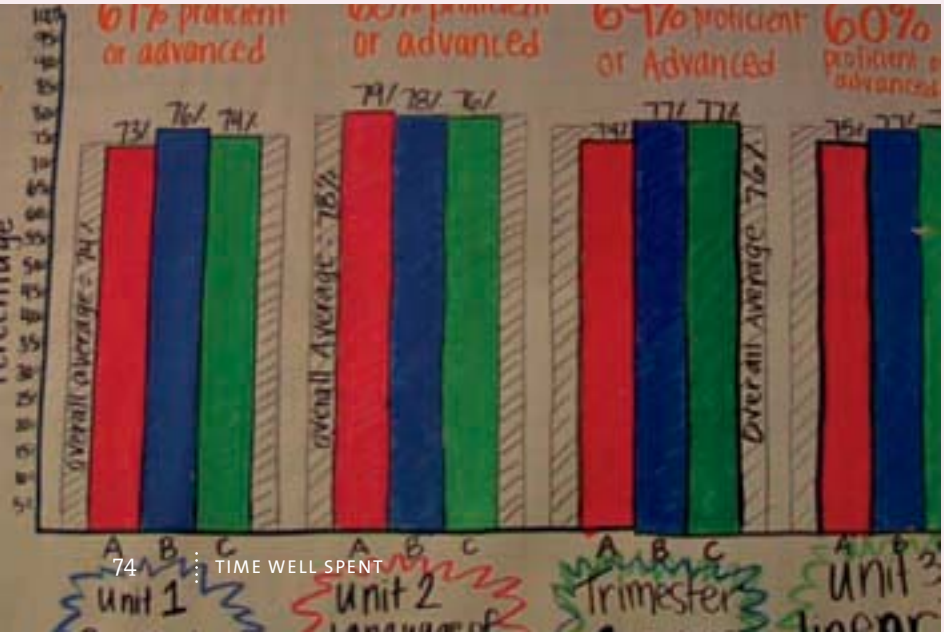
Math: 47% (+10%)

When Matthew J. Kuss Middle School, in Fall River, Massachusetts, expanded its school day in 2006, the faculty and school leadership received training from an educational consulting group, Focus on Results, to learn how to analyze student performance data, set specific goals, and create data displays to keep students and teachers focused on the goals. "Setting clear goals and posting performance data was our 'aha moment,'" recounts Nancy Mullen, the principal of Kuss Middle School. "We now display school-wide and grade-level data in each grade's hallway. Teachers also display MCAS and benchmark data for the entire class and individual students inside their classrooms."

Because it takes time to analyze student data and develop next steps, the Kuss school leadership created a system for collaborative planning that concentrated specifically on analyzing student data and sharing effective instructional practices. Teachers at Kuss now have three common planning periods per week to discuss student data, in addition to a daily individual planning period. "Data is central to our decision making here," says Mullen. "Data is discussed very transparently. Teachers will look at each other's data and ask questions like 'Why is your data better than mine?' and 'What did you do to get students to understand that concept?'"

So that teachers are able to continuously adapt their instruction to meet the needs of students, benchmark assessments are given at least four times throughout the year and the school uses TestWiz computer software to collect and compare results from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test (MCAS) and other benchmarks. Kuss teachers meet three times a week to analyze the data and discuss effective instructional strategies and techniques to use in their classrooms. In each meeting, the teachers look at the data from a different perspective. During team meetings—called "cluster" meetings at Kuss—teachers discuss their students' performances and how they can help support one another as educators across the curriculum. At grade-level curriculum meetings, Kuss teachers look at MCAS and benchmark results for the specific subject they teach to determine skills and concepts on which to focus. They also share instructional strategies that they have had success with as they teach certain skills or concepts with which students are struggling. Teachers also meet with the school improvement team, in order to discuss school-wide trends in student performance and to determine what can be done to make school-wide improvements.

At Kuss, students analyze data as well. Each year, students sign a contract with themselves to do better than they did on the previous year's MCAS and they are given time throughout the year to examine their MCAS and benchmark data to determine their academic strengths and weaknesses. Each student keeps a folder with their advisory teacher, which has all their goals. During their advisory period, they are able to check-in on their own progress and to re-evaluate their goals when necessary. "We feel that it's important to be transparent with our students about how they are doing," explains Principal Mullen.



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Conclusion

Federal, state, and district policies that enable schools to expand learning time for high-poverty students have tremendous potential to improve the quality of education these students receive, but only if the expanded time is well spent. As more schools across the country experiment with expanding their school day or year, they will need guidance on how to structure and manage this time and monitor its impact. There is much to learn from the schools that have been most successful in leveraging a longer school day and/or year to offer a rigorous and well-rounded education that prepares their students for success in college and careers. This learning should be supported through school visits, network-building, and more widespread sharing of effective practices across expanded-time schools.

This report has focused on how high-performing, expanded-time schools use time, and there are three areas that deserve further exploration. First, we need to better understand how these high-performing, expanded-time schools pay for and staff their longer schedules. Some of the schools in this study have initiated innovative staffing strategies to implement a longer school day or year. A number of schools have made key tradeoffs—such as increasing class size or reducing administrative positions and other types of overhead—to fund the expanded time. Other schools utilize additional funding designed specifically to support expanded time, like the state grants made available through the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative. While exploring funding options is beyond the scope of this study, understanding the costs of expanded time, and the resource allocation decisions facing high-performing, expanded-time schools, is a critical next step to identifying sustainable strategies more districts and schools can adopt to offer more time for learning.

Another essential area to explore is the experiences of those schools that have converted to an expanded schedule from a conventional schedule. These schools are scarce in number. Of the 30 schools in our study, 19 are charter schools that began as expanded-time schools when they were first founded. Another 5 of the district schools profiled also originated as expanded-time schools. Only 6 of the 30 schools were converted to expanded-time schools from existing schools that operated on a conventional school calendar. A key challenge for the movement to expand learning time is to understand the specific challenges and opportunities inherent in conversion. More models and examples of successful district conversions are needed to highlight the specific decisions and implementation practices that matter most in these settings.

Finally, this report has not delved deeply into the topic of school leadership. School leaders across the 30 schools profiled in this report are bold, energetic, and hard-working educators who have built strong teams of teachers committed to realizing their students' success. The need for strong leaders to manage the complexities that result from a longer school day or year cannot be underestimated. To see more successful conversions of district schools to expanded-time schools, we need to build a cadre of school leaders who deeply understand the opportunities and challenges of expanded learning time and who can make strong implementation decisions about how time is used across the school day. Programs that train and support school leaders, particularly those who accept roles in high-poverty schools and/or turnaround settings, must educate and inspire participants on the possibilities of expanded learning time and back their efforts to innovate around time use.

Expanding time is not the only lever for improving low-performing schools. Yet, as some of the most successful schools demonstrate, more time is a powerful lever for boosting student achievement, closing opportunity gaps, and improving teacher effectiveness. The challenge is to use time wisely and well. At the National Center on Time & Learning, our hope is that the eight practices we describe in this report, along with the 24 keys to success and the 24 brief school profiles included here, illustrate how schools can harness the full potential of expanded time to foster student success.

Appendix: Methodology and Data on Profiled Schools

Methodology

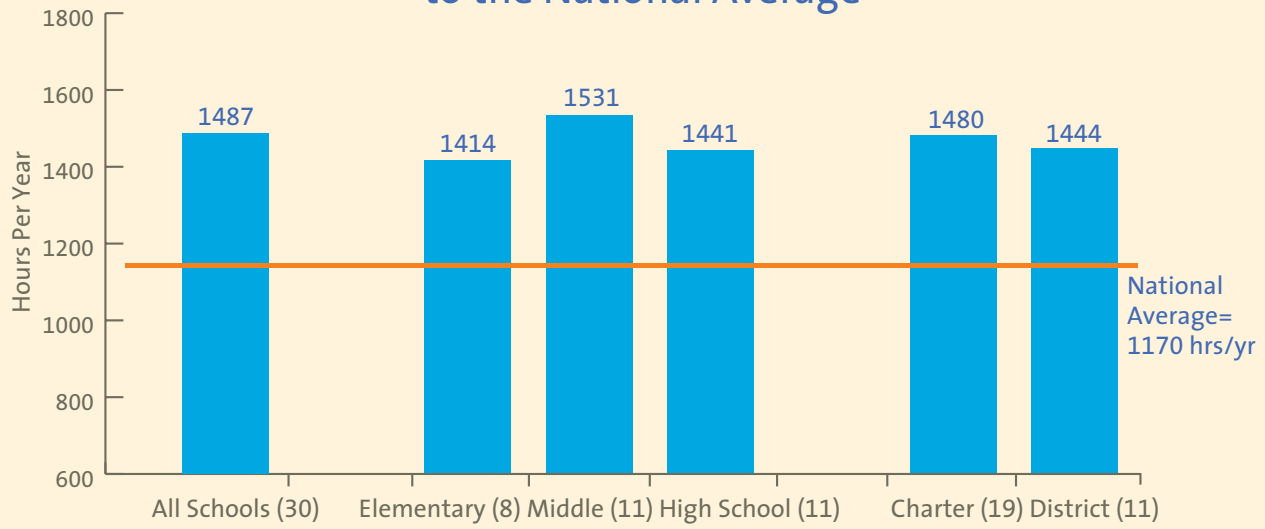
The 30 schools included in this study were selected from the National Center on Time & Learning's (NCTL's) database of Expanded-Time Schools, which contains approximately 900 schools across the country with more student time—additional time each day and/or days per school year—than surrounding district schools. From this pool, the schools specifically selected for this study needed to meet a number of key criteria, based on the following rationales:

- Because we were interested in learning about schools that had significantly expanded their day and/or year, we focused only on schools with at least a seven-and-one-half-hour daily schedule, or at least 60 more minutes of school per day, or at least 10 more days per year than surrounding district schools;
- Because we wanted to better understand how expanded learning time supported low-income students in achieving at higher levels, we limited our research to schools with at least 60 percent or more students eligible for free and reduced lunch;
- Because we were looking to study schools that were outperforming other schools serving similar student populations, we examined data from state standardized tests and then selected schools where the average proficiency rate in math or English language arts was at least five percentage points higher than the average proficiency rate in the surrounding district.

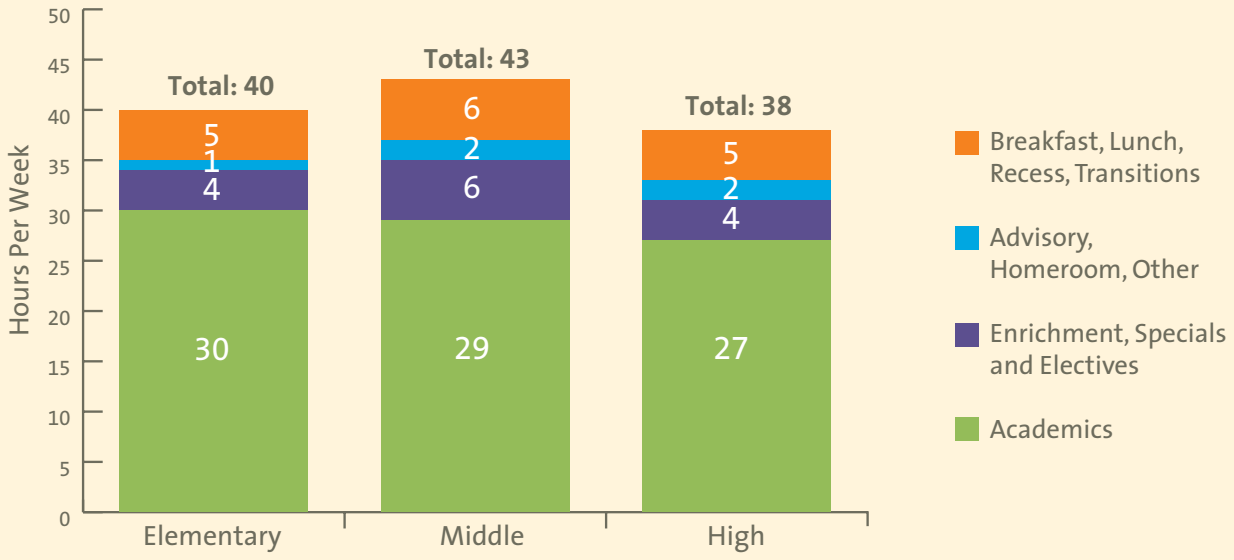
Many schools in the study far surpassed one or more of these three criteria. For example, some schools outperform surrounding district schools by more than 20 percentage points on state standardized tests. Although more than 30 schools in NCTL's database of expanded-time schools fit this profile, we narrowed our selection to a group of schools that presented geographic diversity; a balance between charter and non-charter schools; and a roughly equal number of elementary, middle, and high schools.

Initially, through letters, emails, and phone calls, we invited approximately 40 schools to participate in the study; in the end, we included a total of 30 schools as several schools declined to participate or, due to recent changes in performance or schedule, no longer met some of our criteria. At each of the 30 schools, we collected teacher and student schedules and conducted a one-hour phone interview—typically with the principal or other administrator at the school. In each setting, we used a common survey instrument, which we had designed to gather information on time use and school practices in areas including academic instruction, enrichment opportunities, teacher development, data use, school culture, staffing, and budgeting. Following the interviews, we conducted site visits at 12 of the surveyed schools in order to observe expanded-learning time in action and to gather more insights from the teachers and students there.

Hours Per Year at Profiled Schools Compared to the National Average



Breakdown of School Time at High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools



School Size, Location, and Demographics

The 30 schools examined in this study include 8 elementary schools, 11 middle schools and 11 high schools. The average of the students in the 30 selected schools who qualify for free and reduced lunch is 80 percent. The schools are located in 11 different states, including Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Texas. The schools range considerably in size, but are mostly quite small with an average of 450 students. Nineteen of the schools operate as charter schools and 11 as district schools. As many as 24 started with an expanded school schedule, while only 6 converted to an expanded school schedule from a more conventional schedule.

Amount of Schooling per Year

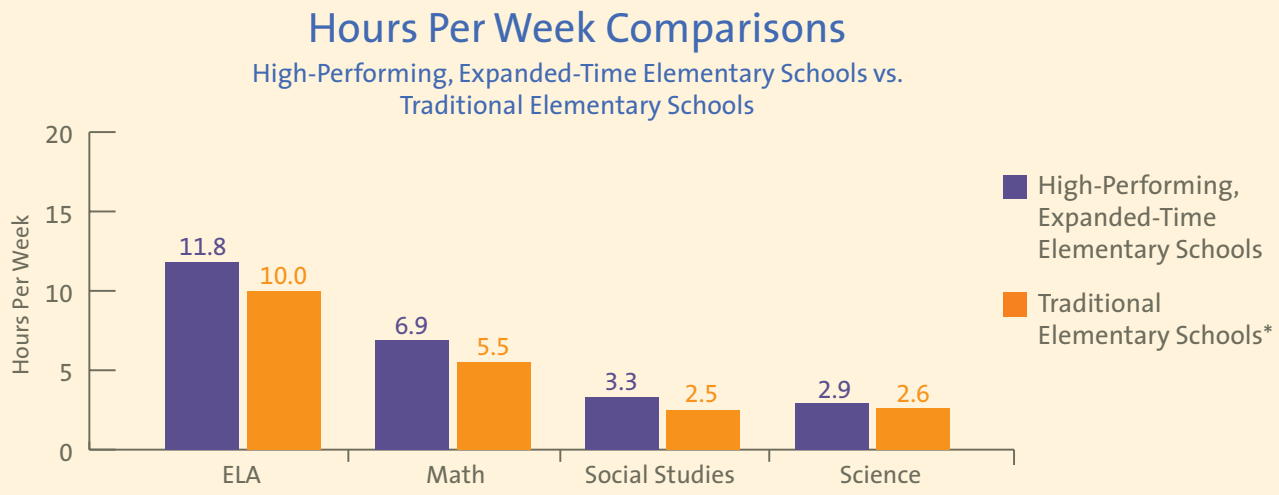
The average amount of time students spend in school, across the schools profiled in this report, was 1,467 hours per year—almost 300 hours more than the conventional school calendar of 1,170 hours. This average covers significant diversity in the sample, relative to the number of total hours of schooling—the 30 schools ranged in hours of schooling from a low of 1,224 hours per year to a high of 1,680. Charter schools in this study have longer days and years than most of the district schools, and middle schools in the study have longer days and years than the elementary and high schools we examined.

Time Allocation for Students

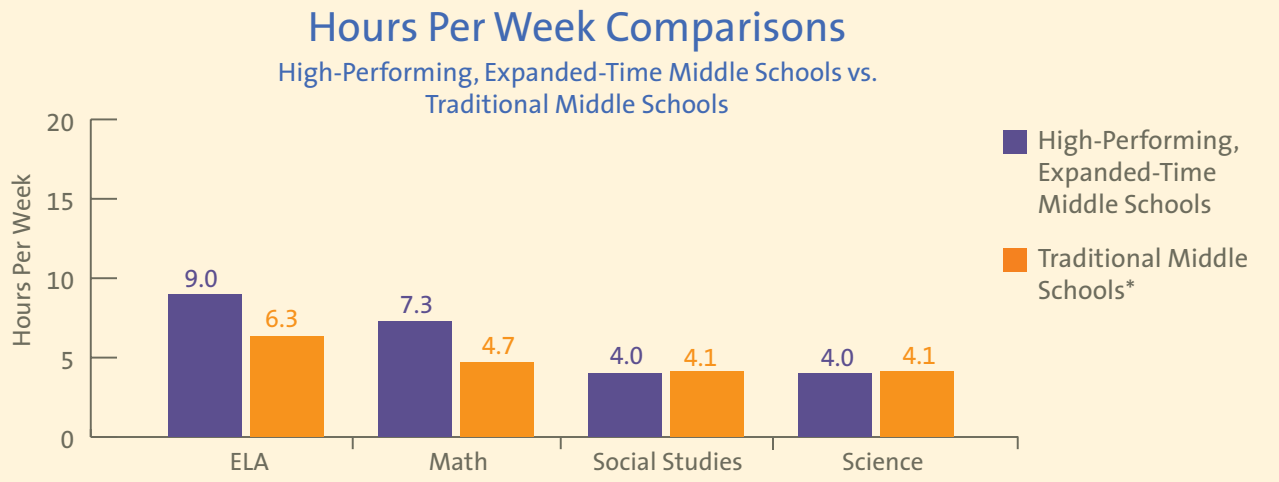
Predictably, time dedicated to academic instruction dominates school schedules. On average, students in the profiled schools spend 28.7 hours per week in academic classes—the equivalent of almost an entire school week at conventional schools with a 33-hour week. The charts on page 80 depict time allocation at the schools across the categories of academics, enrichment, advisory/homeroom, and non-instructional time such as breakfast, lunch, and classroom transitions. These charts also show that the time spent within each area is roughly proportional across elementary, middle, and high schools.

While our National Center on Time & Learning study did not collect comparison data on time use at other schools without an expanded schedule, some information exists on this topic from other sources. An analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) reveals how time is used by schools at the elementary and middle levels.[10] Using this analysis for comparison purposes, the graphs on page 80 show that the high-performing elementary schools in our study offer substantially more time for English and math than traditional schools and only slightly more time for science and social studies. Again, the average masks some diversity within our data set, as some elementary schools in the study offer between six and seven hours per week on science.

At the middle school level, this trend toward adding significantly more time for ELA and math is even more pronounced, with 7 expanded-time middle schools offering as much as 50 percent more time for these two subjects than conventional middle schools. The profiled



* Source: *Time and Learning in Schools: A National Profile*



* Source: *Time and Learning in Schools: A National Profile*

middle schools offer a similar amount of time for science and social studies as conventional middle schools. While SASS data is available at the high-school level, no analysis of time was available for comparison purposes. It is possible that the preponderance of time spent on ELA and math at the schools profiled in this report may reflect the fact that our methodology used standardized test scores in ELA and math (typically the only consistently available data on school performance) to initially identify these higher-performing schools.

Scheduling Conventions

Academic Support

Interviews with school leaders revealed a number of common organizing strategies for student learning time across the profiled schools. As many as two-thirds of the profiled schools offer double class periods of math and/or ELA. This practice was almost universal at the elementary school level (7 out of 8 elementary schools profiled in this study offered such double periods), but slightly less common at middle and high school level (8 out of 11 middle schools and 6 out of 11 high schools offered such periods). Another very common practice across the 30 schools was the inclusion of an additional block of academic support or remediation tailored to meet each student's academic needs. For example, students struggling in math would spend time with a teacher and other students at their same level reviewing specific math standards during a dedicated block of time. Twenty of the 30 schools in the study offer such a block in students' schedules at least once weekly, with many schools offering it every day for students who require the most help. Of the 10 schools that do not schedule this type of class during the school day, all offered a similar type of program for students outside school hours.

In general, among this set of high-performing, expanded-time schools, learning time is not limited to the school day alone: 19 of the 30 schools offer, and sometimes mandate, after-school academic programming for some students; and 13 of the 30 offer, and sometimes mandate, such programming for students on Saturdays. Thirteen of the 30 schools also offer academic programming for students during the summer months. In all, as many as 25 of the 30 schools offer some sort of academic support outside regular school hours for their students (5 out of 8 elementary schools; 10 out of 11 middle schools; 10 out of 11 high schools).

Time for Homework

Through our interviews with school staff, we also gathered information about time students spend on homework at the schools profiled in this study. While homework policies vary considerably from school to school and by grade level, on average, students at elementary schools spent one hour on homework per night and middle and high school students spent two hours on homework per night.

Time for Electives and Extracurricular Activities

While not universal across this cohort, many of the high-performing schools also offer an array of electives and enrichment programming meant to broaden educational opportunities for their students. Fifteen of the schools profiled offer elective programs for their students. These activities are offered over and above the more typical "specials" (such as art, music, and physical education) that do not involve student choice. In addition to such programs offered during the school day, many schools also offer students opportunities to participate in such programming after school. At least 7 of the profiled schools have extensive extracurricular activities, which serve substantial proportions of their students, taking place after school.

Time for Culture-Building

Many of the profiled schools also devote time to programs focused on character education, social-emotional supports, or school culture-building. Thirteen of the 30 profiled schools have active advisory or homeroom programs with an explicit curriculum focused either on reinforcing school values or on offering students social and emotional supports. Fifteen of the 30 schools schedule regular community meetings for the entire school, or for entire grade levels each week, which often are used as forums for further highlighting school values and building a positive learning environment. Ten of the 30 schools conduct special orientation programs for incoming or new students during the summer, which teach and reinforce high expectations for student behavior and achievement.

Time for Teachers

Data on student time is far easier to compile than data on teacher time, because teachers often have more discretion on how certain non-teaching periods are used, often devote time beyond what is actually scheduled, and frequently spend their time quite differently depending on the subjects and grades they teach. Our reviews of teacher schedules and interviews with school leaders revealed that teachers at these high-performing, expanded-time schools have a scheduled school day that is an average of 8.2 hours long.

On a typical day, teachers at these profiled schools have an average of 85 minutes of time dedicated to either individual preparation or common planning. At 19 of these schools, teachers actually have 90 minutes or more of their day reserved for this type of non-teaching work. Over and above this daily time, 23 of the 30 schools profiled schedule an early release day weekly, or bi-weekly, to provide additional structured opportunities for collaboration and professional development. Ten of the schools in this study also schedule entire "Data Days" for teachers—days during the school year devoted to analyzing benchmark assessment data and planning based on results. Many of the profiled schools also schedule extensive teacher development days, either during the summer or during the school year, for teachers to work together to improve their teaching. Overall, one-third of the schools in the study schedule 15 or more professional development days when teachers are in session without students.

End Notes

[1] Laura Hamilton, et al, *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, September 2009).

[2] Lawrence W. Lezotte, *Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation* (Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products, Ltd., 1991); Lawrence W. Lezotte and Kathleen McKee Snyder, *What Effective Schools Do. Re-Envisioning the Correlates* (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2010).

[3] Jennifer McMurre, *Instructional Time in Elementary Schools: A Closer Look at Changes for Specific Subjects* (Washington, D.C.: Center on Education Policy, February 2008).

[4] Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

[5] Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea, *Education Pays 2010: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society* (New York, NY: College Board, September 2010).

[6] KIPP Foundation, *The Promise of College Completion: KIPP's Early Successes and Challenges* (San Francisco, CA: Author, April 2011).

[7] The math and ELA scores were self-reported by Brooklyn Generation School, Brooklyn, NY.

[8] Eric A. Hanushek and Steven G. Rivkin, "Teacher Quality," in *Handbook of the Economics of Education, Volume 2*, ed. Eric A. Hanushek and Finis Welch (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: North Holland, 2006), 1051–78.

[9] T-charts are two column graphic organizers students use to list and identify their claim and evidence prior to answering a question in writing.

[10] Tammy Kolbe, Mark Partridge, and Fran O'Reilly, *Time and Learning in Schools: A National Profile* (Boston, MA: National Center on Time & Learning, and Storrs, CT: Center for Education Policy Analysis, March 2011).

National Center on Time & Learning

The National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) is dedicated to expanding learning time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education. Through research, public policy, and technical assistance, we support national, state, and local initiatives that add significantly more school time to help children meet the demands of the 21st century.

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