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# REIMAGINING THE SCHOOL DAY: MORE TIME FOR LEARNING

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This publication was produced as part of a commitment by The Wallace Foundation to develop and share knowledge, ideas and insights about expanded learning time.

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**The Wallace Foundation commissioned Education Sector, a Washington, D.C.-based independent education think tank, to write this conference report. Elena Silva is senior policy analyst for the organization; Susan Headden is senior writer/editor there.**

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## ■ Foreword

*By Will Miller, president, The Wallace Foundation*

The forum at the center of this report took place not quite two months before I had the privilege of assuming the reins of The Wallace Foundation from M. Christine DeVita.

Chris, Wallace's founding president, was the foundation's guiding spirit for almost a quarter of a century. She was key not only to Wallace's emergence from a collection of family philanthropies into a single national foundation, but also to the organization's unusual, and respected, approach to its mission. Today, largely because of Chris' vision, Wallace's work encompasses much more than making grants. Hand-in-hand with grantees, the foundation develops and tests innovative ideas on the ground, gathers credible evidence about what works and what doesn't, and then shares this information with policymakers and others who can use it to benefit our most vulnerable children.

We all owe Chris a debt of gratitude for shaping Wallace into what it is today. True to the spirit of the foundation she created, this publication focuses on inquiry and evidence gathering. Specifically, the report documents a May 2011 Wallace conference that laid out questions to be answered if the United States is to solve a difficult problem: The traditional school day and year do not contain enough hours to enable America's neediest urban children to learn what's necessary to lead successful lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We need to find extra hours and make sure that every moment is used well.

Supporting more time for learning, over summer and during the school year, is new for Wallace, although it emerges from our years of work in education, after school and arts learning. We launched the initiative in June 2010 with grants to groups including three premier providers of summer learning programs: Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), Higher Achievement and Horizons National. Shortly thereafter, we began supporting School of One, which uses technology to tailor math teaching to the needs of the individual child; Project READS, a summer reading program; and the KIPP schools, which feature expanded school hours. The conference, bringing together key thinkers and doers in expanded learning, was another initiative milestone.

More has happened since.

Over the summer of 2011, we published *Making Summer Count*, a RAND study that looks at the research on summer learning loss and possible solutions. If the resulting commentary and press mentions are any indication, the report struck a chord in communities across the United States. Wallace also announced it would help six school districts develop strong summer learning programs and test whether the programming can produce lasting academic gains for low-income students. Working with the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, we've begun supporting Citizen Schools, which works to expand the school day for low-income middle school students, and Communities in Schools, a highly regarded drop-out prevention program.

We intend this initiative to aid two groups: grantees and those who need ideas and information to make beneficial change for our least advantaged children. In that spirit, we hope this report spurs the kind of informed discussion necessary for progress in helping these children across the country.





## ■ Five Troubling Facts and a Way Forward

*Adapted from the May 16, 2011, opening address to the forum by M. Christine DeVita, founding president of The Wallace Foundation. DeVita retired in June 2011 after 24 years of service to Wallace.*

For this forum on **Reimagining the School Day**, we want to envision an era in which it's recognized that the conventional six-hour-a-day, 180-day-a-year school calendar is not enough for many children, especially disadvantaged children who need more time for learning. We have gathered a group of people well equipped to help us in this exercise: city leaders, school superintendents, researchers at think tanks, heads of after-school organizations, foundation officers and federal officials. You are the ones who run institutions, set policy, connect leaders and guide thinking on education policy. You hold a piece of the solution for making progress.

Together, I hope we can begin to imagine a path forward.

But first, because facts are friendly, let me suggest that we need to confront five troubling realities.

**First**, despite progress, we still have a sizable achievement gap between white students and those of color. Consider these statistics:

White 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders on average score about 26 points higher than black children on assessments, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>1</sup> That's important in part because the chances that a student will complete college in less than six years vary based on his or her academic preparation, according to the Higher Education Research Institute.

College graduation rates vary dramatically by race and ethnicity. The four-year graduation rate for white students is nearly 38 percent, almost double the 21 percent rate for Mexican-Americans, and 29 percent rate for African-American students.

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Vanneman, Linda Hamilton, Janet Baldwin Anderson, Taslima Rahman, *Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress*, National Center for Education Statistics/ U.S. Department of Education, 2009, iii.

Although the picture improves if you look at six-year graduation rates, as of 2005 the United States was one of only two countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development where children’s educational attainment did not exceed their parents’.

In today’s globally competitive environment, we will not be able to maintain our leading position or our standard of living unless we improve the educational results for all our children.

**Second**, the traditional school calendar has remained unchanged since well before the publication of *A Nation at Risk* almost 30 years ago, despite growing evidence that it is insufficient to meet the needs of many poor kids.<sup>2</sup>

A large body of research suggests that a significant part of the achievement gap occurs because poor children lose more learning over the summer than their wealthier counterparts, and that this loss accumulates over time.

Children spend most of their waking hours outside school, and this time is often lost time.

About one quarter of children are unsupervised in the afternoon.<sup>3</sup> Too many languish after school and over the summer – playing video games, watching television or just hanging out – activities that are negatively correlated with academic achievement, according to research for a forthcoming study we’ve commissioned from the Child Trends research group.

Unfortunately, the trend is moving in the wrong direction. In 2009, the Kaiser Family Foundation found that use of entertainment media by kids rose to 7 hours 38 minutes *a day*, with black children watching almost twice the amount of TV as their white counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, reading held steady at a paltry 25 *minutes* a day.

**Third**, just adding extra time won’t help, unless that time is spent in high-quality programs where kids are actively engaged in learning.

We know from decades of research since the early 1960s that the more time children spend “on task,” that is, focused on learning, the more they will learn.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “By the 1960s, most schools in the country had settled on a schedule of 170–180 days, five days a week, six and a half hours a day. This has remained the standard in American public schools since then: a 2004 survey by the Council of Chief State School Officers found that 35 states require the school year to be 180 days or longer, and six require between 175 and 179 days; the same survey found 34 states require five or more instructional hours per day (or no less than 900 hours per year).” Elena Silva, *On the Clock: Rethinking the Way Schools Use Time*, Education Sector, 2007, 2. <http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/OntheClock.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *America After 3 PM*, Afterschool Alliance, 2009, 3. [http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM\\_National\\_2009.pdf](http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM_National_2009.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The negative effect of high levels of media use is explored in a Kaiser Family Foundation study, which finds that youth with high media use (more than 16 hours per day) reported getting lower grades than those with light media use (less than three hours per day). Black children spend nearly six hours and Hispanics just under five-and-a-half hours, compared to roughly three-and-a-half hours a day for white youth. The report, based on a survey of 2,000 youngsters ages 8 to 18, reflects the reality that children and teens often use more than one media device simultaneously. Victoria J. Rideout, Ulla G. Foehr and Donald F. Roberts, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds*, Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia012010nr.cfm>

<sup>5</sup> “Past research has established a link between relevant academic learning time and student achievement. Although instructional time, in and of itself, is not sufficient, it is necessary in order to provide the relevant academic learning time. Compared to other developed countries, students in the United States receive fewer hours of instruction—799 per year compared with 861 in Finland, 911 in the Netherlands, 928 in Japan, and 1,079 in Korea (Silva, 2007). Furthermore, the American school calendar is notable for its long, formal summer break, especially when compared to school calendars in other countries. Some countries have shorter, more equally spaced breaks, while others have formal mechanisms to help students retain over breaks what they learned in school (Wiseman and Baker, 2004).” Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Catherine H. Augustine et al., *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning*, RAND Corporation, 2011, 19-20. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Documents/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.pdf>

This implies that just adding more time in school is not enough – it means more time in which children are actively engaged in learning. So improving the quality of instruction is just as important as increasing the time for it.

**Fourth**, public revenues for schools and nonprofits alike are shrinking and are not expected to recover for some time. Private dollars will not make up the difference.

Given the national debate about deficits, expansive new federal programs are unlikely.

Cities are facing tough times, and states will experience one of the toughest budget years on record in fiscal 2012.<sup>6</sup>

Budgets are being slashed and services eliminated.

Some school districts are shortening the school day or year, thus actually reducing learning time.

We can't look to private giving to make up the difference. Individual donations to charity dropped 20 percent from 2007 to 2009, according to IRS data, a decline steeper than previously estimated.<sup>7</sup> Foundation giving has been relatively flat over the past few years, and experts think it will take several more years to return to peak 2008 levels.<sup>8</sup>

And **fifth**, we are fighting among ourselves for the limited funding that does exist, creating divisions between those who want government funds to be used in schools and those who see it as a critical revenue source for after-school programs.

There's a fiery debate over whether 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funds should be permitted to support a longer school day. Some advocates and providers of services for youth argue strongly for it, and some against it.

We are even fighting over terminology – expanded learning, expanded learning time or extended learning time.

But this is about more than semantics. The painful result is that policymakers are growing impatient, and we risk alienating our supporters with what they see as turf warfare at the expense of the interests of our children and teens. If we cannot come together, we risk getting nowhere fast and squandering an opportunity.

## IMPLICATIONS

These feel like five tough facts – achievement gap persistence, the inertia of traditional notions of school time, the need for quality, shrinking revenues and infighting. What do they mean for us? Let me suggest a few implications.

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<sup>6</sup> “The current fiscal year (fiscal year 2012) is shaping up as one of the states’ most difficult budget years on record. Some 44 states and the District of Columbia projected budget shortfalls totaling \$112 billion for 2012.” Liz Schott and LaDonna Pavetti, *Many States Cutting TANF Benefits Harshly Despite High Unemployment and Unprecedented Need*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2011. <http://www.cbpp.org/files/5-19-11tanf.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Holly Hall, “Americans Gave a Lot Less in the Recession Than Experts Predicted,” *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, April 22, 2011. <http://philanthropy.com/article/Americans-Gave-a-Lot-Less-in/127244/>

<sup>8</sup> Steven Lawrence, *Moving Beyond the Economic Crisis: Foundations Assess the Impact and Their Response*, Foundation Center, November 2010. [http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/researchadvisory\\_economy\\_201011.pdf](http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/researchadvisory_economy_201011.pdf)

Although some educators, policymakers and others are paying more attention to finding better ways to increase learning time, strong forces are working for maintaining the status quo. As Ron Wolk quips in his new book, *Wasting Minds*, “Except for organized religion, no social institution has changed less in the past century than public education.” So we need to be prepared to work incrementally over time – it will be a marathon and not a sprint.

We are entering what is more likely a period of experimentation than a wholesale redefinition of the school day. It’s crucial, therefore, that we document and learn from innovations, and gather reliable information about what they mean for students, so we can reduce the uncertainty about what drives success and what dampens it.

Given that a massive new federal program is not in the cards, decisions to expand learning time are likely to be made one city, one district and one state at a time. Solutions may differ widely.

There is one other implication, and it may be the biggest. Because we live in a resource-constrained era, we need to change not only what we do – but how we work together across sectors. In recent years, urban government experts have concluded that cities can no longer directly provide all the services that citizens need. Instead, they can succeed only by working with and through other institutions. Scholars like Stephen Goldsmith call this “governing by network.” If that is true for municipal government, in these tough fiscal times it is doubly true for public education. If we are to take advantage of all the resources a community has to offer that could benefit children, it is high time we recognize that *schools can’t do it alone*.

That means new ways of working. We need more trust and data flowing between schools and after-school providers; we need the expanded-learning-time and the after-school communities to find common ground; and we need government, foundations and nonprofits to find more efficient ways to work together – matching opportunities, maximizing learning and minimizing duplication.

This new way of working will require leaders who can help bridge different sectors, build a shared vision with an emphasis on quality, and commit to collecting reliable data that make measurement, collaboration and accountability possible.

## A FRIENDLY CHALLENGE

In light of all this, here’s a friendly challenge:

To nonprofits serving children: Can we gather solid information about whom we serve and the contributions we make to youngsters’ learning and growth?

To schools: Can we take advantage of expanded learning opportunities and share data with after-school providers so they can be part of the solution?

To federal and state policymakers: Can we permit more flexible use of funds?

To local government: Can we bring together the community’s resources on behalf of all children, knocking down bureaucratic walls when necessary?

And to foundations: Can we find better ways to work together and share lessons learned so that the same mistakes don’t need to be made over and over again?

In my view, the only answer to these questions is, “we can and we should,” because despite the current difficulties, there are glimpses of momentum and reasons for optimism. Here are seven:

- New legislation and federal policies show that the idea of more time for learning is slowly moving onto the national education agenda.
- Think tanks including RAND, Education Sector and the Center for American Progress are analyzing what is known. Membership organizations like the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers have teams at work. And issue organizations have formed to build awareness and understanding, including the National Center on Time and Learning and the National Summer Learning Association.
- Some of our nation’s largest cities are expanding summer school, while nonprofit organizations that provide additional summer learning opportunities like BELL, Higher Achievement and Horizons National are seeing increasing demand for their services.
- For the first time, more than 25 cities from Baltimore to Fort Worth are systematically collecting data on after-school programs and, increasingly, helping improve their quality.
- Foundations, which can generate innovations and knowledge, are also investing. Wallace is joining a number of philanthropies committed to this issue, including the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Victoria Foundation and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, to name just a few.
- Growing media interest is raising public awareness.
- Finally, and crucially, we have more evidence than ever about the power of more learning time for those who need it most. As an Education Sector report put it, the “addition of high-quality teaching time is of particular benefit to certain groups of students, such as low-income students and others who have less opportunity for learning outside of school.”<sup>9</sup>

Let’s remind ourselves that none of this was true a decade ago.

Through our collective wisdom, action and sacrifice, we can create a world that places all our resources in service of the goal of ensuring that all of our children – especially those with the greatest needs – grow up with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, attitudes and habits that will help them lead productive, rewarding lives.

A century and a half ago Alexis de Tocqueville described this collective work as “self-interest, rightly understood,” and he found it an essential ingredient in the success of the American democratic experiment.

The same idea was captured centuries earlier in an African proverb: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.”

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<sup>9</sup> Silva, *On the Clock*, 1.



## ■ More Time for Learning: Has Its Moment Arrived?

*By Elena Silva and Susan Headden*

### INTRODUCTION

There are never enough hours in the day – this familiar frustration applies to virtually all of life’s undertakings. When it comes to educating our young people, the expression is beginning to seem particularly true. What appeared as a small blip on the school reform radar screen a decade ago has today grown into a national movement to increase and better use the hours that American students spend learning. Thousands of K-12 schools, including some of the most successful charters, are operating for longer days and longer years, or are planning to.<sup>10</sup> Dozens of school districts are building bridges between school and after-school or summer programs, and still more have “found” minutes, hours, even months by innovating with technology and scheduling.

These developments formed the backdrop for a two-day conference, **Reimagining the School Day: A Forum on More Time for Learning**, that brought more than 70 education, nonprofit and policy leaders to Washington, D.C., in May 2011 to discuss expanded learning time, identify the barriers to realizing it and forge a way forward. The size of the challenge was made clear from the start, as M. Christine DeVita, then-president of The Wallace Foundation, which hosted the event, laid out the frustrating realities: inertia born of traditional notions of school time, shrinking government revenues and infighting among education and after-school supporters.

Yet a handful of indicators over the last few years in Washington and the states suggest that “more time for learning” is making its way onto the national education reform agenda. Under the 2009

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<sup>10</sup> Roughly 2,000 public schools are operating or experimenting with extended day and year schedules. This includes about 750 charters, 250 traditional public schools and more than 1,000 schools receiving federal funding through the School Improvement Grants program. Source: combined data from the National Center on Time & Learning and School Improvement Grants, U.S. Department of Education.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, increased learning time became a key eligibility requirement for several important federal education funding programs: School Improvement Grants, Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation. Following the lead of Massachusetts, which in 2011 re-committed funds to its expanded learning initiative, states like Colorado, Oklahoma and Rhode Island have created task forces to explore different models of expanded time. Nine states are slated to host mayoral summits on citywide after-school efforts in 2012.<sup>11</sup> And the weak economy notwithstanding, several large American cities, among them Dallas, Boston and Cincinnati, have instituted large-scale summer learning programs.

“This means that despite the challenges we face, the time seems ripe for progress,” said DeVita.

### AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT FOR MORE TIME

A decade ago, a forum like this might not have been possible.

In those days, with mounting pressure on schools to boost student achievement, the policy conversation centered on the idea that simply adding hours and days to the school schedule would result in

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*“Despite the challenges  
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for progress.”*

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more learning, and, therefore, higher test scores. Inspired by a 1994 federal report, *Prisoners of Time*, policymakers proposed a wave of reforms. The problem was that most were unsophisticated – tacking on tutoring hours in reading and math, or, less commonly, adding time for subjects like art and social studies that had been squeezed out of the classroom. Questions about costs, or the value of changing hours without changing teaching methods, were asked but went mostly unanswered, as policymakers had little empirical data to look to.

## KIPP



KIPP, the national network of charter schools started in 1994 by Teach for America alumni Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, is based on five pillars. The first four are: giving principals the power to lead, setting high expectations, making it clear that KIPP is both a choice and a commitment, and focusing on measurable results.

Then, there's the fifth, a feature of particular interest to those in the expanded learning field: spending more time on task. KIPP students usually attend school from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week and from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. two Saturdays a month. Middle schoolers put in even longer hours; they are required to go to two or three weeks of summer school, which includes extra-curricular activities. The bottom line: KIPP kids spend about 60 percent more time in school than their non-KIPP peers.

This schedule is demanding for teachers, and it asks a lot of parents. (Children, maybe not so much: “When kids were leaving at 3 p.m. no one was saying, ‘Boy am I pooped. I need a nap,’” Feinberg said.) But in KIPP's strictly “no excuses” culture, it's the way it has to be. “We expect a lot of our teachers,” Feinberg told the conference audience.

More than 95 percent of KIPP students are African-American or Latino, and more than 75 percent come from low-income families. A study by Mathematica Policy Research found that “[KIPP's] impacts on students' state assessment scores in math and reading are positive, statistically significant, and educationally substantial.”

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<sup>11</sup> Supported by Wallace and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Today, by contrast, the federal government is viewing expanded time in the context of school reform — in part, “driven by the need for American students to succeed and compete around the globe,” according to conference speaker Roberto J. Rodriguez, a special assistant to President Obama on education. Funding, once limited to two separate sources — 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers for after-school and summer programming, and Supplementary Education Services for after-school tutoring for students in low-performing schools — is woven throughout the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act’s school improvement programs. As a result, more than 2,000

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*“We start with a simple belief:  
that all children can excel.”*

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schools now are adding or experimenting with adding 10 to 60 percent more hours to their day and up to 30 more days to their year.<sup>12</sup> A congressional proposal, Time for Innovation Matters in Education, modeled after Massachusetts’ expanded time initiative, would dramatically up the number.<sup>13</sup>

One reason for the heightened interest is likely growing recognition that summer learning loss is a very real phenomenon and takes its biggest toll on the most vulnerable: low-income youngsters. Over the long summer break, many children forget some of what they learned during the previous school year, but research has documented time and again that the loss is especially severe for poor or minority kids. These are not children who would be “forgoing a trip to Disney World” if they took part in a summer learning program, noted Nancy Devine, who oversees after-school and more-learning-time initiatives at Wallace. And they acutely feel the consequences of an annual three-month break from school, as, with each passing year, they slide back so far academically that they have little chance of catching up. “We shouldn’t be surprised that we have an achievement gap,” Elena Silva, senior policy analyst at the Education Sector research organization, told the gathering. “We’ve designed a system that all but guarantees it.”<sup>14</sup>

Another reason for more attention to time is a realization that the conventional school day and year — six or so hours, 180 or so days — may simply not be enough, especially for children with few learning or enrichment opportunities outside school. “What we’re talking about here is, how do we wrap services and supports around children at a scale — and more broadly than just thinking about schooling — that will replicate the kind of success that upper-middle-class families have had?” asked Paul Reville, Massachusetts’ secretary of education. It was a question that found expression in numerous conference conversations. PBS NewsHour senior correspondent Gwen Ifill, a forum moderator, asked it this way: “How do we make the best of the time we have for the children who are in school and when they are out of school? How do we close the gaps that develop once they are no longer in school?”

In recent years, a number of possible answers, in the form of promising programs, have begun to emerge, from innovative school district-run summer projects to technology-driven classrooms during the school year. The head of one effort, Tiffany Cooper Gueye, CEO of Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), might have been speaking for many at the conference when she described the premise of her organization. “We start,” she said, “with a simple belief: that all children can excel.”

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<sup>12</sup> This total adds together schools listed in the National Center for Time & Learning database and those that submitted plans for School Improvement Grant funding.

<sup>13</sup> Initially introduced in 2008 by Sen. Edward Kennedy, the TIME Act was reintroduced in 2011 (S851, HR1636).

<sup>14</sup> Silva is also a co-author of this report.

## THE FIFTH QUARTER

By Memorial Day, most public school students are starting to wrap up their studies and look forward to a summer break that can stretch beyond Labor Day. Not so in Cincinnati. To arrest learning loss and provide a seamless transition from one grade to the next, the school district has added four weeks to the school year. The Fifth Quarter, as the bonus time is known, runs for a full school day, from 7:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m., but it's a very different kind of day. In the morning, students focus on core subjects like reading, language arts and math. The afternoon brings enrichment programs including art, music and environmental education, as well as activities that reinforce reading and math. The schools look to the community to help program the afternoons, often with outdoor activities like exploring neighborhoods or working in a community garden.

Cincinnati is jump-starting students on the other end of summer, too: Students in the district's four lowest-performing schools head back to the classrooms two weeks early in August. Teachers are paid extra for the work, and before school ends in June students are given plenty of reminders of the schedule, including T-shirts. "We have tried every gimmick we could think of to get them to show up," Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan said. By September students are ready to go, already familiar with their teachers and with the goals they are expected to reach.

The Fifth Quarter program is taking place at 16 low-performing schools and unlike summer school, it isn't viewed as remediation. Rather, it's seen as a boost to learning, even an academic acceleration. Attendance, though voluntary, is strongly encouraged.

The Fifth Quarter was originally funded by the federal Title I program for high poverty schools as well as by other federal, state and local programs, and donations from local businesses and community groups like the United Way. Government funds pay for the morning program, and the private groups pay for the afternoon. In summer 2011, private funds were expected to pay for 40 percent of the program.

Although the district is still evaluating the Fifth Quarter, attendance numbers so far are encouraging. In recent years, generally no more than 750 students signed up for traditional summer school, Ronan said. Last year, the Fifth Quarter attracted 2,000 students.

### IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS, FINDING SOLUTIONS

If the case for expanded time was clear to forum participants, they also readily acknowledged that many barriers keep promising ideas from being implemented and successful programs from growing and being replicated elsewhere. The federal stimulus funding helped, but is unlikely to be repeated. At the same time, unfriendly regulations create headaches for program operators. Partnerships among schools, community organizations and other groups essential to making high-quality

expanded time workable can be hard to establish and maintain. Leadership is needed across all sectors and at every level. And hard evidence – particularly about what program features work best for children over time – is sparse.

Difficulties begin with terminology. Over time several different approaches to the same goal, supporting students' learning outside the traditional school day, have emerged

– and along with them, several different vocabularies. The result is that the same words mean different things to different audiences, a recipe for confusion. Take the term "after school." For some people, it is shorthand for what goes on not only after 3 p.m. on weekdays during the school year but also for programs that run before school, over summer, on weekends or during school-year vacations. "Out-of-school time," also known by its initials, OST, has been adopted by those hankering after a more precise term, but few outside of a small circle use it. Then there's the matter of

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*A number of school districts  
and programs have found  
acceptable ways to share data.*

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## TASC (THE AFTER-SCHOOL CORPORATION)



After-school professionals and classroom educators have a lot to teach one another about making learning stronger and more engaging. That exchange rarely happens, but in

New York City's Expanded Learning Time schools it is becoming the normal course of things.

The After-School Corporation (TASC) launched expanded learning in 17 schools, with the idea of coordinating and blending the academic rigor of classroom learning with the richness and, well, plain fun, of after-school learning. A typical fourth-grade class, for example, starts the day at 8 a.m. and doesn't wrap up until after 6 p.m. Within that time, core academic classes – English, math, science and writing – are interspersed with history, art, drama, student leadership, homework help and more than an hour of sports and recreation. That's 35 percent more time than a traditional school schedule, at a cost estimated at just 10 percent above usual school spending.

The project was launched three years ago through a partnership among TASC, the city Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Community Development. The principal of each participating school must commit resources to the venture, and the school and community groups are required to work together on everything from planning to professional development.

This marks a departure for organizations used to working independently of one another. "It's a real recognition of the cultural change," said TASC president Lucy Friedman. "It has taken a while to unlearn everything we've been taught about school education, but we're finding that it's happening."

Nicholas C. Donohue, president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation: "If you believe that the endgame is greater variety and pathways for learning for kids, then that could mean more time or, more importantly, different ways of using time." What is blocking innovation, then? Shelton asked. What is keeping states and districts from using time differently?

One factor, participants said, is the perception that government regulation constrains action.

Take data sharing. If after-school programs and schools exchanged information about children, both classroom and after-school activities might be better and more individualized. But school districts and after-school providers are often skittish about sharing information, concerned about privacy and other legal considerations. Although those fears are legitimate, they may be overblown, Peck suggested. Indeed, a number of school districts and programs have found acceptable ways to share data, according to a study by the RAND Corporation that found "a wide range of OST data-sharing agreements" across eight cities.<sup>15</sup>

Another misconception surrounds how school districts can spend federal dollars, in particular funds from Title I, which focuses on boosting the achievement of disadvantaged students. "Nothing precludes a state or district from using 20 percent [of Title I funds] for summer learning," said Ron

"expanded time" vs. "extended time." To one camp of educators, the former term suggests school-plus-after-school programs. The latter term, for some, indicates only a longer school day or year. This paper uses all terms broadly: "Expanded" and "extended" refer interchangeably to more learning time in any scheduling configuration or programming type. "After school," "out-of-school time," and OST embrace summer, weekend, before-school and school-year breaks, too.

### *Red Tape: Imagined and Real*

"What can we do at the federal level to increase learning time?" That was the question posed by Jim Shelton, head of the Office of Innovation and Improvement for the U.S. Department of Education, who joined Jennifer Peck, director of the California-based Partnership for Children and Youth, to lead a wide-ranging discussion on which policies hinder and help the cause of increasing learning time.

His question was promptly met by another one, key to the field: Is the goal simply adding more hours and days? Participants agreed that it is not. Said

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Nate Orr, Susan J. Bodilly et al., *Hours of Opportunity: The Power of Data to Improve After-School Programs Citywide*, RAND Corporation, 2010, xviii.

Fairchild, founder of the Smarter Learning Group and former CEO of the National Summer Learning Association, “but folks don’t know this.”

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## *The main problem with money is “lack thereof.”*

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Often, however, red tape is real, not imagined. Mary Ronan, superintendent of Cincinnati schools, told the forum how restrictions on allowable locations for serving school lunches could have thwarted a proposal to offer free meals to disadvantaged children on a Boy Scout outing. A more serious conflict – an unfair labor practices dispute with the local teachers union – emerged over the correct formula for paying teachers for the two weeks they served in an expanded time program in the city’s lowest-performing schools. For her part, Paige Ponder of the Office of Student Support and Engagement for Chicago Public Schools, which oversees out-of-school time programs enrolling 92,000 students, said she needed more authority to decide where to spend dollars from the federal Supplementary Education Services tutoring fund. Now, she said, 60 percent of her budget goes to tutors who have little accountability to the school district. Ronan echoed the complaint. Overall, said Ben Boer of Advance Illinois, a state policy and advocacy group, “federal and state policy can be way too prescriptive.”

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### SCHOOL OF ONE



Time has long been a constant in K-12 schools. Most follow a schedule that was designed 100 years ago and measures progress by the hours sitting in a classroom.

An innovative middle school math program in New York City turns this concept on its head, making time a variable and pacing instruction around students’ individual progress. At the School of One, each student gets his or her own lesson plan. Students are assessed every day, and based on the results, they either move ahead or spend more time mastering what they need to. Lessons are tailored to their strengths, weaknesses, interests and learning styles.

Joel Rose, the program’s former CEO who is now leading an independent effort to spread the concept nationally, offers an example of how the concept works. Students report to a big open math lab and check for their names on overhead monitors that look like the screens displaying flight schedules at the airport. They then go to one of about 15 different stations, with locally inspired names like “Statue of Liberty” or “Staten Island” where, based on their individual progress, they might engage one on one with a teacher, do a worksheet, play a computer math game or be tutored in a group.

School of One’s built-in efficiency results in costs that are not necessarily higher than a traditional classroom’s. Now operating in three schools, the program is funded by nearly a dozen private and government funders, including a \$5 million Investing in Innovation grant from the federal Department of Education. The program planned to expand to other schools in 2012, but New York’s budget problems have postponed that for at least another year. Meanwhile, the existing program is getting high marks. A small 2010 evaluation comparing students who participated in School of One’s after-school and in-school programs with those who did not, found that, on average, School of One students “significantly” outperformed the others.

Participants urged one policy change pertaining to what may seem a peripheral issue: chronic absenteeism. Longer days and years, they pointed out, won’t make any difference for students who don’t show up in the first place. One place to start, they agreed, is to change the way attendance is tracked. Now, schools monitor their daily overall attendance rate. Under this reporting scheme, an average of 90 percent attendance may sound good, but it most likely means the same 90 percent of students are coming to school every day, while another 10 percent are consistently AWOL. Yet it is these chronic absentees who most need help. That begins, participants said, with attendance data that capture the reality for individual students.

#### *Money*

Lucy Friedman, president of The After-School Corporation, which oversees an expanded learning project in New York City public schools, got knowing laughs from the audience when she summed up the problem with funding for expanded time as “lack thereof.”

But limited funding is just one concern. Another is the strings that come attached to what few dollars there are.

Expanded learning initiatives almost always rely on complicated combinations of public and private funds. In addition to Title I, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers and Supplemental Education Services support, programs can turn to federal community development, health or juvenile justice funding or to initiatives including the National School Lunch Program, the Child Care and Development Fund and AmeriCorps. Each source brings its own set of rules and restrictions – which demand copious amounts of time for understanding what money can lawfully be spent on what purpose.

Friedman says that raising money for the expanded learning effort in New York City has proved to be “a real challenge,” requiring the pooling of dollars from sources devoted to causes ranging from crime reduction and pregnancy prevention to education for homeless children. “Government makes it difficult to braid and blend that funding,” she said. A six-week summer enrichment program for students in low-performing schools in and around Jacksonville, Fla., meanwhile, has survived since its founding in 2009 through combining funding from sources including Title I, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, School Improvement Grants, Race to the Top and the state, according to the program’s head, Kathryn LeRoy, academic officer for Duval County Public Schools.

Although both the New York and Jacksonville programs have been able to stitch things together, the need for such patching diverts attention from the larger possibilities. “I don’t believe we do the best job looking systematically at all the pots of money that may be available to support student achievement,” LeRoy said. “How do I leverage all possible dollars to use them the best way I can?”

### *Books and Cyberspace: Unchaining Learning from Traditional Schedules*

Not all designs for expanded learning are about stretching the school year and school day. Some involve learning unchained from scheduling or place. One such effort is Project READS (Reading Enhances Achievement During the Summer), which supplies disadvantaged elementary school children with summer reading books matched to their reading level and interests, along with end-of-the-school-year reading help from their teachers, an emphasis on parental involvement and other features. Early research on this relatively low-cost program, developed at Harvard University, suggests it can help stave off summer learning loss in reading.

Digital technology holds promise as well. New York’s pioneering School of One, now aiming for expansion with a \$5 million federal grant, customizes math instruction around students’ individual progress. Students are assessed with a short online quiz every day, and based on the results and other factors, such as how individual students learn best, they either move ahead or are taught the same content the next day with a different method. They may be directed to engage one-on-one with a teacher, do a worksheet, play a computer math game or be tutored in a group. “This is about changing what teaching looks like and what learning looks like,” said School of One founder Joel Rose, who is now leading a national organization to replicate the concept. “It’s about changing the whole design of delivery.”

Public television, long a player in education, has been expanding its reach by making the most of the latest technology. Ted Libbey of the PBS Foundation said the organization is creating games, iPad applications and other after-school-friendly materials that include videos, like one of former Beatle Ringo Starr offering a short history of drumming.

Whether they rely on old-fashioned books or the newest apps, expanded-time programs can rise or fall based on the content of their materials, so program leaders must choose their teaching tools well. One key to Project READS, for example, is the distribution of books that kids genuinely like to read. Forum participants said that digital content in particular often disappoints, amounting to little more than textbooks put online. “We need to be more student-centered,” said Randy Barth, CEO of THINK Together, a leading California after-school program provider. “The power of technology is to flip that.” How do you decide on content? How do you match content to standards? And how do you know how well it’s working? These are all questions awaiting answers.

### *Wanted: Collaboration*

Many supporters of expanding learning time also believe that schools cannot go it alone. They need “partners” – community organizations that might deal in anything from sports to dance to robotics – to succeed in filling the extra hours with activities that seize children’s interests and effectively teach them.

Partnerships are difficult to forge, however, not least because each partner has its own goals and approaches. What do providers of school-day and after-school programs have in common? An ultimate goal of helping children lead successful lives, to be sure. But public education and community groups have different missions: the primary responsibility of a school is to give a child a strong academic education; the responsibility of a community group varies from organization to organization – it can range from boosting athletic prowess to preventing pregnancy – but it might generally be described as strengthening personal development. With all sides dedicated to their particular missions, and no shared vision, forum participants agreed, expanded learning is nothing more than a tangled web of add-on and one-off services, lacking coordination and common purpose.

Scarcity of funding only makes things worse, as illustrated by a controversy that has flared up over proposed changes to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. The proposals are pitting schools against after-school programmers because of fears that they all will be competing for the same small pot of dollars.

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*What are the right measures:  
A sense of hope?  
Regular school attendance?  
High school graduation?*

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An overriding passion for children could help unite these disparate groups, and opportunity can come from many places. Elizabeth Partoyan, strategic initiative director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, pointed to the national movement by states to adopt a set of common educational standards. The Common Core Standards initiative is not just about instilling content knowledge, Partoyan explained; it also seeks to ensure that students have certain “habits of mind” such as persistence, adaptability and problem-solving ability – all characteristics that reflect the out-of-school time field. “[Common Core] represents an opportunity to bring these sectors together,” said Partoyan.

Recent years have seen the emergence of several thriving partnerships that can serve as models. Citizen Schools, for example, brings what it calls “a second shift of educators” – a team of full-time trained educators and part-time volunteers with expertise in areas ranging from arts to engineering – into schools to work with students on engaging, educationally sound projects. It began as an after-school program, but in 2006 three Massachusetts schools chose Citizen Schools as their partner in a project to lengthen the school day for all students. At Edwards Middle School in Charlestown, for example, Citizen Schools helped the faculty provide 35 percent more time for math, theater, sports and other subjects. Essential trust, Citizen Schools CEO and co-founder Eric Schwartz said during the forum, is best built by each partner demonstrating its capabilities to the other, or “showing success.”

An after-school network that started in Providence, R.I., in 2004 shows how partnerships can work across a city. Features of the effort there include shared data collection, transportation coordinated among schools and after-school programs, and collaborative governance and funding. Hillary Salmons, the longtime director of the nonprofit overseeing the system, the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), explained that while the boundaries of in-school and out-of-school learning are now more “blurred” than they once were, there is nothing unclear about the effort’s purpose: better learning experiences for city kids. “We spent years getting to the point where we could show that



BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) believes that achievement gaps can't be closed within the confines of a traditional school day. That means after-school enrichment, and it means summer learning. BELL students are working on average 1.2 years below grade level. Using data from assessments designed to reveal specific academic strengths and weaknesses, the program engages these students after school

for three to five days a week in small groups that learn by working on projects. Summer programs combine traditional academics with tutoring, service projects and hands-on activities. BELL works closely with the schools, meshing its offerings with district standards. "We asked, 'How do we better leverage time to help kids reach their full potential?'" said Tiffany Cooper Gueye, CEO of BELL. "We use time to build academics, but with programs that are engaging and fun."

BELL is also big on mentors and parent involvement. "Children spend only 20 percent of their waking hours in school," Gueye observed. "Outside, parents are the key factors." BELL works to bridge the language and economic barriers that often keep parents from participating. When circumstances still interfere, BELL connects students with other adults who can fill the role. Mentors are especially important for students ages 9 to 15, when the risk of becoming disengaged from school is particularly high.

BELL sets high performance standards for its "scholars," as it calls them, and regularly measures its progress in reaching them, with standardized tests, quizzes and other metrics. "It's easy to think of nonprofits as being about crayons and scissors," said Gueye, referring to the perception of after-school programs as providers of extras. "But many are about rigor and achieving actual results and closing achievement gaps." An Urban Institute study found that BELL's summer scholars gained a month's more reading skills than a comparable group not attending BELL. The reading and math skills of after-school scholars were tested at the beginning and end of each program cycle; results, according to Bell's studies, show that students in BELL's after-school programs outpaced national norm groups in acquiring new math and literacy skills. BELL surveys also show considerably increased self-confidence, improved social skills and higher college and career aspirations among the students.

Proud as she was to report these accomplishments, Gueye said she will know BELL has truly succeeded when students no longer need its services. She said, "We'd like our success to put us out of business."

PASA was a lasting educational model, not just after-school babysitting," she says. A PASA summer program for middle schoolers, for example, focuses on science and math and is staffed by both school teachers and educators from nonprofits with strong expertise, such as the local museum of natural history.

Achieving collaborations that work requires strong hands at the helm, and forum participants stressed the need for leadership by mayors, superintendents, principals and heads of community organizations. For mayors, said Chris Coleman, the mayor of St. Paul, Minn., "the pressure is to have something around long enough to get results – to pick your model and make it sustainable." The most effective leaders will be those who can convert people who are obstacles into people who are advocates, added Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward, an organization dedicated to improving ongoing learning by school teachers and administrators.

### *Filling the Knowledge Gaps*

Sounding a common refrain, participants agreed they need more evidence on how best to organize and deliver more high-quality learning. What kinds of programs are succeeding? What characterizes high-quality programming? What resources produce the strongest effects? Such questions cannot be answered with certainty because they haven't been rigorously studied.

Although some research has probed the cost-effectiveness of out-of-school programs, for example, little has focused on summer learning. "We don't know very much about the relationships between summer programs and schools," Catherine Augustine, senior policy researcher at RAND, observed.

“We don’t know about the effectiveness of short-term programs versus those that extend over multiple summers.” Participants called for extensive studies on topics ranging from costs and program content to attendance.

Participants also acknowledged that developing a research agenda means answering a difficult question for an endeavor involving so many partners and interests: What results or “outcomes” for children who take part in expanded learning should be examined in the studies? “What are the right measures?” asked Barbara Roth, national director, youth and family, at the YMCA of the USA. “A sense of hope? More regular attendance at school? Graduating from high school?” And a key

question: “Is it fair to hold an after-school program responsible for academic outcomes?” Robert C. Granger, president of the William T. Grant Foundation, added a cautionary note: If you push organizations to produce quantitative data (on effectiveness), they are apt to select students more likely to do well.

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*“This is about expanding learning into every aspect of a child’s life.”*

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The good news is that there are signs of increasing support for quality over quantity in research. James Kim, an assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has received \$15.5 million in public and private funds to conduct research on Project READS.<sup>16</sup> For its part, Wallace has announced plans to track the results of six urban school district summer programs by studying rising fourth graders who take part in them.

Whatever the research ultimately shows, participants were reminded that results are seldom iron clad. “We’re never 100 percent confident,” said Kim. About Project READS’ own effectiveness, he quipped, “I’m 57 percent confident after five years.” Kim’s point? Advocates of expanded learning time would be wise to adopt a sense of humility in understanding how best to deliver a fuller and richer education to all children.

#### **FORGING A WAY FORWARD**

As the forum drew to a close, the assembled mayors, state and district superintendents, and founders and leaders of community organizations seemed to agree that whatever form it takes, expanded learning is an argument against some of the longest-held conventions about learning: that the existing daily and yearly timetable is the right one, that the traditional school schedule provides enough educational opportunity for all children, and that formal, school-based learning is fundamentally different and necessarily separate from learning beyond school walls. “We’re used to the way schools are,” said Reville, the Massachusetts schools chief. “We’ve balanced our delicately framed lives around it.”

We’ve also created distinct domains for children’s learning, the relatively uniform realm of public schools and the more varied world of out-of-school time programs. Bridging the two – structurally, culturally and financially – won’t be easy, but the differences are not irreconcilable. “[The non-profits] make us more kind and gentle, and we say we want results!” said Ronan, the Cincinnati superintendent. “We learn from each other.”

One area of common ground may be a call for high quality in whatever programming is introduced or expanded as a result of the push for more learning time. In 2004, when Wallace was in the early stages of a major after-school initiative, one student memorably told the adults at a Providence After School Alliance planning session: “I’d walk a mile for a quality program, but I wouldn’t walk across the street for a bad one.” His remark bears thinking about: Low-quality programs fail to generate

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<sup>16</sup> The Wallace Foundation is a supporter of Project READS.

learning and developmental benefits for kids; they also fail to generate attendance. The point may seem obvious except that too often programs have offered little more than a reasonably safe place to park children – and sometimes they haven't even offered that.

Can we envision a system that is founded on high-quality opportunities for children? One that supports and tracks learning as it flows in and out of school, that has classroom teachers and outside educators sharing goals, and accountability, for student learning?

Congressman David Cicilline, who spearheaded after-school efforts in Providence when he was that city's mayor, suggested that deep commitment by a community's leaders to children's well-being can point a city in the right direction. "It's about our responsibility to kids from the time they get up in the morning to the time they go to bed," he told the forum.

One thing was resoundingly clear at the forum's end: If we don't increase learning opportunities, we will increase learning gaps. "This is about expanding learning into every aspect of a child's life," said Earl Martin Phalen, CEO of the Reach Out and Read early literacy program and founder of BELL and the Summer Advantage USA program. "Are we willing to do this for all children?"





## The Wallace Foundation

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The Wallace Foundation is a national philanthropy that seeks to improve education and enrichment for disadvantaged children. The foundation has an unusual approach: funding projects to test innovative ideas for solving important public problems, conducting research to find out what works and what doesn't and to fill key knowledge gaps – and then communicating the results to help others.

Wallace has five major initiatives under way:

- School leadership: Strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement.
- After school: Helping selected cities make good out-of-school time programs available to many more children.
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- Arts education: Expanding arts learning opportunities for children and teens.
- Summer and expanded learning time: Giving children more hours to devote to learning.

Find out more at [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org).

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