

3 Expanded Learning Time

The Urban Education Task Force recommends that Rhode Island launch an expanded learning time initiative in the five urban school districts and implement it through a partnership between the Governor’s office, RIDE, and appropriate Rhode Island community-based organizations, with targeted technical assistance from the National Center on Time and Learning.

Introduction

The Task Force seeks to strengthen and transform the educational opportunities available to students in Rhode Island’s urban core communities. Expanded learning time (ELT) is an overarching strategy, going beyond what Rhode Island already offers its young people, to change the way that students learn. Within this overarching strategy, other redesign strategies described in the other recommendations can be addressed and implemented. We believe that ELT can help to align the other recommendations of the Task Force to ensure maximization of effort and impact (see figure on page 7).

In the past several decades, expectations for what children and youth must know and be able to do to be successful have changed dramatically. With higher learning standards in place for today’s students, the traditional school calendar has proven to be inadequate, particularly for students who are most in need. These students face many barriers to learning and have limited access to enrichment opportunities outside of school. Support for expanded learning time has grown in recent years as schools across the United States have tested a variety of promising models and experienced, in many cases, improved student achievement.

An expanded learning time initiative means not just extending time, but providing high-quality, engaging, enriching learning opportunities during that time. It is *more time well used*, which helps students, teachers, community-based organizations, and families in many ways.

- **Students** Provides enhanced academics and enrichment activities that are critical to the healthy development of the whole child.
- **Teachers** Provides the time for high-quality professional development and the time to teach in a way that deepens the curriculum and/or connects learning to real-world applications.
- **Community-based organizations** Enhances and solidifies meaningful partnerships with schools and potentially serves more students. Rhode Island has a rich array of high-quality afterschool and summer programs run by community-based organizations, which enables us to build from a strong foundation on their work. If community and school professionals were to cross-fertilize their knowledge and their educational and youth development strategies, the learning experiences for our children could be extraordinarily rich.
- **Families** Many families have working parents who need their children engaged in high-quality activities until they come home from work.

The additional time can also be used to focus on topics that are critical but have not received the time necessary, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) efforts. More time allows for the inquiry-based and project-based learning inherent in science.

Afterschool and summer programs are successfully expanding learning by offering new and different ways of learning that build on youth development principles. The proven afterschool approach to learning, which is necessary to the success of any effort to expand learning

opportunities, embraces the following practices:

- Engaging, relevant activities are often project-based, community-based, or both and are designed to increase student motivation to learn.
- Linkages are made to the school day, but content is delivered in different ways by applying school-day lessons to real-world settings.
- Academic instruction is designed to meet the needs, abilities, and learning styles of students and provide them with a better chance to succeed.
- Student choice is built into the program design.
- Partnerships among schools and CBOs are essential because they bring new and diverse learning opportunities (see appendix 3S).
- Students have opportunities to work both independently and in groups and to assume leadership roles.
- Communication between families and school-day staff is ongoing.
- Youth development practices model positive behavior management strategies that motivate youth and adults to work and learn together.

Partnerships with community-based organizations also help to alleviate any undue burden on teachers alone to implement an ELT initiative. (See appendix 3S for a listing of sample Rhode Island community- and school-based organizations that could join the ELT initiative partnership.)

Expanded learning time can serve as a model for unifying afterschool and in-school learning. See appendix 3S for a diagram from the Program for Afterschool Education and Research at Harvard representing visually the evolution of the relationship between afterschool and the traditional school day.

Research shows that English language learners (ELLs) can benefit from ELT (see appendix 3S). Currently there is not enough time to provide ELL students with all the support they need – particularly those older students who arrive in the tenth through twelfth grades. ELT could greatly benefit these students as well.

Current Work in Rhode Island

The Task Force believes it is important to recognize and build on structures that already exist in Rhode Island, including the Providence After School Alliance (PASA), RIDE's Childhood Opportunity Zones and 21st Century Learning Centers, full-service community schools, the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance, the Woonsocket Afterschool Coalition, successful Rhode Island charter school models, and related initiatives already under way in some of the core urban districts. As partnerships between schools and community-based organizations are central to the concept of ELT, model design must consider how to recognize and integrate existing and emerging organizations that can provide supports in a range of areas.

Task Force members feel strongly that in addition to academic supports, it will be critical to include a focus on the arts, recreation, and social services to address a variety of youth development needs. Special consideration must also be given to developing structures and supports for addressing the needs of English language learners and special education students. (Descriptions of existing related work under way in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York City are in appendix 3S.)

Recommendations, Action Steps, and Partner Responsibilities

RECOMMENDATION Implement expanded learning time at demonstration sites selected through a voluntary, competitive proposal process.

Administered by RIDE, the ELT School-Community Grants will be distributed competitively to Rhode Island communities for the purposes of planning for ELT in the form of longer school days and/or school years. Preference will be given to those districts that consider a comprehensive restructuring of the entire school day and/or year to maximize the use of the additional learning time; to districts with high poverty rates; to districts with a high percentage of students not achieving proficiency as reported through the New England Common Assessment Program; and to districts that incorporate partnerships with afterschool programs, community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education as part of their ELT initiative.

RECOMMENDATION Ensure that the planning and implementation process is inclusive.

ELT requires that the planning and implementation be inclusive of all stakeholders. Participants in Massachusetts ELT work (described in appendix 3S) noted the particular importance of working with union representatives early and often in the planning and implementation. In Rhode Island, the stakeholders include, but are not limited to: union representatives, principals, teachers, community-based and school-based afterschool and summer programs, and other community partners, including businesses, higher education, parents, youth, legislators and legislative staff, the Governor's office, and RIDE.

RECOMMENDATION Include a series of key design components in the ELT initiative that have been adapted from successful models to the Rhode Island context.

These components include voluntary participation; input from youth; partnerships between community-based organizations and the highest-needs schools and districts; equitable funding between the school and its partners; and creation by candidate schools of a detailed implementation plan, including staffing, breakdown of use of time with specific goals and actions, data systems, a cross-sector planning team, identification of suitable partners, and inclusion of academic and enrichment activities for students and professional development for adults. Details of these key components are included in appendix 3S.

RECOMMENDATION Target specific age ranges with appropriate learning opportunities.

Expanded learning opportunities defined broadly can be effective for students in grades K–12; the specific details of the implementation will vary according to the age of the students targeted. For the type of ELT structure we describe in this recommendation, preliminary research has shown that the greatest impact has been seen at the elementary and middle school levels. Expanded learning for high school students will, by necessity, look different because of issues surrounding work schedules, athletics, and other afterschool commitments that high school students typically have more than younger students. Expanded learning opportunities for high school students will more likely involve internships and apprenticeships that tie their academic, in-school learning with real-world, relevant employment (possibly for high school graduation credit), dual enrollment, and other examples of learning

beyond the classroom. Given the potential of ELT to help older ELL students who enter high school from other countries, the Task Force recommends that elementary, middle, and high schools (including charter schools) all be eligible to apply for a planning grant.

RECOMMENDATION Implement the ELT initiative at the state level initially by hosting it through a public-private partnership that is governed by a Statewide Expanded Learning Steering Committee, in order to maximize capacity and efficiency and ensure that this initiative is a catalyst for change and not a one-time project. The Task Force recommends that this public-private partnership include the Governor's office, RIDE's Office of Middle and High School Reform, and the Rhode Island After-school Plus Alliance.

The Steering Committee will develop a five-year strategic business plan for the initiative. The composition of the Steering Committee will include but not be limited to: RIDE, the Governor's office, legislators and legislative staff, Rhode Island Federation of Teachers, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, higher education, the Board of Regents, superintendents, principals, teachers, Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance, Providence After School Alliance, community-based and school-based afterschool providers, funders, Rhode Island Association of School Committees, and youth.

In addition to the Steering Committee, each school participating in the planning process will implement its own local design team (composition of these teams is described under Key Components in appendix 3S).

RECOMMENDATION Engage the Rhode Island higher-education community in the ELT initiative.

University students, faculty, and staff are already active educators in many out-of-school-time programs in Rhode Island. For example, Brown University has over eighty outreach programs; the University of Rhode Island has an intensive partnership with Central Falls; Rhode Island College trains most of the state's teachers; and Johnson and Wales has significant service-learning requirements. Providence College has adopted an AfterZone campus in Providence middle schools supplying over fifty student volunteers each year, office space, research support, and facilities access to the over 200 middle school youth in that particular AfterZone. Colleges and universities in this state are a resource in the learning of our children and youth and there are many ways they could be even more of a resource, particularly within an ELT initiative.

RECOMMENDATION Allocate specific roles and responsibilities to the partnering organizations in the public-private management structure according to the functional needs of the ELT initiative.

These roles will be more fully fleshed out in partnership with the Steering Committee, but we include some illustrative examples in this section. In addition, due to the nature of partnerships, some roles and responsibilities will be shared. See appendix 3S for a proposed timeline for these activities.

Statewide Expanded Learning Steering Committee

- Develop a five-year strategic business plan for the ELT initiative.
- Provide overall oversight of the ELT initiative.
- In partnership with school ELT teams, RIDE, and an external evaluator, develop a three- to five-year evaluation plan with

short-, mid-, and long-term academic and youth development outcomes, as well as process outcomes for planning and implementation.

RIDE

- Manage the administrative components of the ELT initiative, including the request for proposal process, planning, and implementation process.
- In partnership with the Steering Committee, identify and contract with appropriate technical assistance providers and evaluator(s).

Governor's Office

- Participate on Steering Committee.
- Assist in the development of policy, sharing of results, and fundraising.

Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance

- Serve as the liaison for community-based and school-based afterschool and summer programs working with ELT schools.
- In partnership with the technical assistance providers, offer joint professional development for community-based and school-based teachers at ELT schools on both youth development principles and integration of academic standards into experiential learning.
- Partner with the Steering Committee, management agencies, evaluator, and technical assistance providers to share results, fundraise, and develop policy.

RECOMMENDATION Offer ongoing technical assistance and professional development to both the local participating schools and the Steering Committee to ensure that practice and policy are responsive to best practice.

The Steering Committee, in partnership with the public-private partnership managing the initiative, will facilitate the selection of

technical assistance and professional development providers. Targeted technical assistance will be provided by appropriate organizations with the requisite expertise, including the National Center on Time and Learning, the After-School Corporation, and others to be determined based on local site and state need.

The technical assistance during the first year with schools conducting their planning will include, but not be limited to:

- four to five training sessions for planning schools (e.g., overview of planning process, setting a vision for a new school day, assessing student and school needs, identifying schoolwide academic focus, developing redesign plans and budgets, etc.);
- supporting district and union leadership discussions and negotiations to ensure communication and coordination with the goal of reaching negotiated agreements;
- policy development.

Accountability and Sustainability

Evaluation

The Task Force recommends that a comprehensive evaluation of the ELT initiative be conducted by a highly qualified outside evaluator. The specific outcomes will be defined by the local sites during the planning process, in partnership with the Steering Committee, but will include both academic and youth development outcomes. In any work around outcomes, it is essential that the goals and outcomes be aligned with intentionality to the actual design of the program: hence, the importance of developing a logic model for the work. The Steering Committee will work during the first planning year to develop a logic model and outcomes for the initiative in partnership with an external evaluator and the planning teams at the schools that

receive planning grants. The Task Force recommends that the goals and outcomes of the ELT initiative be aligned and integrated with the Board of Regents' goals for student achievement and with RIDE's goals, outcomes, and indicators for its school redesign work.

The Task Force recommends that participating schools in an ELT initiative have the following broad categories of outcomes, to be determined in detail through a logic-modeling process with the Steering Committee, an external evaluator, and the planning teams at the ELT schools (adapted from Forum for Youth Investment 2008, p. 3; full reference in appendix 3S):

- **Youth-level outcomes** Academic and youth development outcomes
- **Program-level outcomes** Characteristics that describe and demonstrate the value of high-quality ELT programming, including activity characteristics and structural features
- **System-level outcomes** Characteristics of well-coordinated systems that lead to improved quality, scale, and sustainability

The Task Force also recommends that a process and outcome evaluation be conducted, assessing both the process implementation strategies and the quantitative outcomes, and that the evaluation be based on a growth model rather than an annual cohort model. Task Force members feel strongly that the design of the logic model and outcomes be appropriate and realistic and that there needs to be enough funding allocated for a comprehensive evaluation by an external evaluator.

Required Resources and Fundraising Strategy

- **Planning grants** \$5,000–\$20,000 per district
- **Implementation funding** Based on best-practice research, the annual per student amount will most likely be in the range of \$1,300 to \$1,800

- **Technical assistance and support** \$35,000 for the first planning year
- **Evaluation** [to be determined]
- **Secured and potential funding sources** The FY2010 state budget includes \$100,000 for RIDE to implement an ELT initiative, beginning with planning grants for the 2009-2010 academic year. The National Center on Time and Learning is looking for partners nationally to implement ELT initiatives, and Rhode Island has been considered as a potential partner site. If Rhode Island qualifies, federal support for the initiative may be available through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Race to the Top competitive funds and pending legislation. Private foundations have also expressed interest in supporting ELT in Rhode Island. The Statewide Expanded Learning Steering Committee will develop and implement a fundraising plan.