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More Learning Time Is Vital in Helping English Language Learners to Succeed

With ELL population expected to double in coming years, scaling successful strategies is critical

Schools that add significantly more time to their schedules are able to offer English language learners the extra support necessary for their success, according to a new report released today by the National Center on Time & Learning.

With the number of students who are English language learners (ELLs) likely to double in coming years, it's more important than ever for schools across the U.S. to design and implement educational practices and strategies that best meet ELLs' learning needs, says the report, *Giving English Language Learners the Time They Need to Succeed*. To inform both practitioners and policymakers in bringing about this higher level of school support, the report profiles three expanded-time elementary schools, providing both the framework and compelling examples for understanding how the strategies and effective practices aimed at helping ELL students blend together to produce a high-quality education and serve as the foundation for future success.

"Today's standard school calendar of 180 six-hour days simply isn't enough to give children – particularly children who aren't native English speakers – the education they need for success in the 21st century," said **Jennifer Davis**, co-founder and president of the National Center on Time & Learning. "The benefits of having more instructional time during the day and across the year to build in many layers of learning and mastering English are undeniable. With substantially more time than the conventional schedule, the schools we document are able to provide the kind of deep support that traditional schools find much more difficult to do."

Across the three schools, *Giving English Language Learners the Time They Need to Succeed* identified four effective practices that have led to student and teacher success. The four practices are:

- **Extended literacy blocks.** Having upwards of 2.5 hours each day to focus on skills need for reading and writing, the three schools are able to include lots of repetition and tailored instruction. In one school, the extended blocks enabled a series of instructional methods that would have been nearly impossible to roll out fully in a shorter time period.
- **Designated intervention sessions.** Using data to pinpoint areas where individual students struggle, the schools subdivide students into small groups who then work with expert instructors to overcome these challenges. Further, organizing these sessions to supplement, rather than supplant, core academic classes means that ELL students do not have to miss other essential learning periods.
- **Continual Support.** Even when ELL students can speak fluently and have been in the United States several years, their need to boost their academic English skills typically extend into at least the upper elementary grades, and these schools continue their individualized support of ELL students through the fifth grade.
- **Teacher collaboration, planning, and professional development.** To help ensure that the first three practices are utilized to the fullest, teachers must meet with each other frequently and consistently to share best practices, identify and address individual student needs, and plan and align lessons.

They must also continue to get training and support for their own learning so that their pedagogy is always cutting edge.

The report also includes a series of recommendations for practitioners interested in implementing the strategies outlined in the report, along with recommendations for policymakers looking to support teacher excellence. Three of the recommendations include:

- **Support the expanded learning time movement, which enables schools to allocate adequate time for student learning and a variety of teacher professional development opportunities**
- **Support schools-level decision making to allow the professionals working closest with students to make curricular and instructional decisions**
- **Support job-embedded professional learning as part of the teacher work day**

“We know these schools are not uniquely capable in supporting and advancing ELL students, but both individually and collectively they offer many essential insights about what it takes to meet the goal of providing ELL students with high-quality educational experiences that prepare them for future success,” writes the report’s author, David Farbmán. “For students who are working to meet increasingly higher educational standards while at the same time learning to become proficient in a new language, more time in school can be invaluable.”

To read the full report visit: <http://www.timeandlearning.org/publications/giving-english-language-learners-time>

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About the 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, NCTL supports national, state, and local initiatives that add significantly more school time for academic and enrichment opportunities to help all children meet the demands of the 21st century. For more information, please visit <http://www.timeandlearning.org>