

# Instructional Time Task Force Report



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# 2007 CSBA Instructional Time Task Force

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## Introduction

The California School Boards Association convened an Instructional Time Task Force in 2007 to examine efforts to both increase the instructional time in California and to enhance the time that currently exists. As California school districts face challenges in both the state and federal accountability systems to dramatically increase student performance on the California Standards Test, it has become increasingly evident that many students are in need of additional instructional time. At the federal level, accountability is linked solely to English/Language Arts and Math and at the state level, it is rounded out by adding History/Social Science and Science. However, those four subjects are not the limits of what Californians expect for their students. Students need to be exposed to a rich and comprehensive curriculum. Further, for many students, even with longer amounts of instructional time focused on English/Language Arts and Math, it still isn't sufficient time to develop proficiency on the content standards. But with the high levels of expectations for student achievement on the state assessment and the threats of severe sanctions if students do not perform well in those subjects, many schools in California have been forced to focus only on four subjects.

**This report is intended to spur local education leaders to examine ways to enhance instructional time for students and for teachers to ensure that students are engaged in a rich and comprehensive educational program.** It is hoped that this report will prompt discussion by school boards on the strategies and resources that can be provided to actually give students more time for learning and teachers more time for professional growth. This report can also be used to inform state level decision-makers on the need for changes. Short of that, the report also explores ways to enhance the limited time that schools already have.

Many students will need the gift of time if districts are to close the achievement gap and prepare students to compete in a global economy.



# **Expanding Instructional Time—** An Examination of Options

## Governance considerations

As boards consider increasing instructional time, they should keep the following in mind:

### Determine what your community needs

If the district would like to begin expanding instructional time, governing boards and staff must have a clear understanding of the community's needs. Conducting surveys, focus groups and interviewing parents, students, school staff, local law enforcement and community based groups will help determine what type of program to create. As a needs assessment is carried out, boards and staff may also use research of similar programs to build support and interest with community members. Needs assessments should vary locally but will likely include demographic projections, estimated costs, funding sources, age of students to be served and program purpose. A common misstep is a lack of purpose. Before a program begins in the district, community members, parents and students should decide on a particular emphasis: remediation, enrichment or both. For example, after school programs may emerge from a need for child care and for a safe place to house students after 3 p.m., but it may be a new way to introduce academics into a non academic program. Will the curriculum support and be on a continuum with the regular school day? What activities (such as art, music, science or physical activity) should be accentuated? Will current district staff capacity be equipped to startup and continue the programs? As districts advocate locally, it is imperative that board members understand and be able to describe the community's needs.

### Commit to the program

Once the district decides to expand instructional time, it must make a commitment to the program. Board members must turn the commitment into policy and incorporate the various components of the program into the district strategic plan. If the board makes expanding instructional time a top priority, it will follow that it will have to be a priority of the staff. While it is crucial for governing boards to advocate for high-quality programs, a financial commitment is imperative. With other significant programs competing for the same dollars, board members must make expanding instructional time a priority. Many programs may begin with grant funding, but the district must plan for program sustainability. Early planning will ensure the district can support the programs with or without grants. The best programs run even when funding is tight, because they have the district's full support.

## Determine what the district can provide

High expectations will help achieve program goals, but must remain financially feasible. Decide what the district can provide early on in the planning process. Grant funding may help a new program get started; however, governing boards cannot overlook the huge need for district investment: teaching staff, facilities, operations, administrative time, custodial support and security. For example, in an afterschool program, many districts cut costs by using existing unused space such as empty classrooms or auditoriums. Donating facilities and authorizing a non-profit organization to operate the program may be the ideal level of district involvement.

## Workforce

For many summer school and preschool programs, workforce recruitment and retention may be a challenge. Districts will need to develop professional criteria for those instructors and make efforts to recruit the most talented staff available. Often, college age students compose the majority of program staff in afterschool programs. However, in other communities, hiring parents and senior citizens to staff afterschool programs can create a strong and dedicated workforce. When credentialed teachers are used, interested teachers are typically paid an hourly substitute wage. If the district is committed to hiring credentialed teachers it will likely need to allow for flexible scheduling.

## Effective partnerships

Districts can expand instructional opportunities through partnerships with other agencies or community-based organizations. School districts who have successfully established partnerships work continuously to build positive relationships. Mutual trust is necessary for partners to explore creative ideas and take required risks together. Honesty and transparency, especially related to finances, will help focus partners on a shared vision and goals. The district must keep partners informed of major decisions and hold regular meetings. Successful programs anticipate challenges and continually seek new partnerships to increase their sustainability.

## Establishing high quality programs

As a governing board sets direction for programs that provide additional instructional time for students, it will likely concentrate on quality programming and outreach. This includes a highly competent staff to deliver high quality instruction. Program standards should also be established including ratios of students to staff, the credentialing of staff leadership, conducting regular assessments and professional development. Connecting with parents and guardians of the students in programs will be a key program component. Staff should continuously ask parents what they need from the program through surveys, face to face meetings and focus groups, monthly meetings, and regular newsletters. Several California programs have established advisory councils for parents and community members to provide input.

## Monitor and evaluate programs

Once the initial steps are taken to set up a program, school districts will need to evaluate and fine tune various program components. Most grant funding requires some data collection and evaluation and the district will need to determine what additional information is pertinent for their own use. Regardless of the evaluation process, districts and program staff should consider sharing positive results with the community to build and sustain support. Several software programs are available for purchase which track student data and financial information.

Among the many district priorities and programs, board members must maintain support. The biggest fear can be sustainability and this fear is often intensified by grant-reliant programs. Does the district have a backup plan for the program when the grant sunsets? If the district is in strong unanimous support students, parents, community members and partners will continue to be positively drawn to these programs.

## Summer school

Summer school provides an excellent opportunity for districts to expand instructional time for students. Whether as a way to provide intervention for struggling students or enrichment activities for students who spend most of the school year in focused core academic classes, summer school should be carefully examined by districts to ensure that it maximizes opportunities for all students.

Research demonstrates that the achievement gap between white students and poor and minority students increases during long summer breaks. Low income students lose more than two months of reading progress over the summer each year in their elementary school years.<sup>1</sup> But academic loss can be significant for all students. On average, students lost 2.6 months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation over the summer break.<sup>2</sup>

The primary funding source for summer school programs are supplemental instruction (SI) dollars reimbursed by the state of California. Contrary to popular belief, there is no dedicated summer school funding stream. All SI programs may be offered before or after the regular school day, on Saturdays, during intersessions, or during summer sessions and are solely for the purposes of remediation. In 2007, SI reimbursements were based on an hourly rate of \$4.08, not on an average daily attendance (ADA) basis. Many school districts and county offices of education (COEs) find the reimbursement rate inadequate to cover actual program expenses. Additionally in FY 2006-07 there was a state deficiency for funding SI programs. In order cover costs or expand program offerings to include enrichment, some districts and COEs dip into their general funds, use Title 1 dollars and charge parent fees.

Currently, SI programs are limited to remedial support. However, all students can benefit from increased instruction through SI programs, including enrichment opportunities. As the Legislature contemplates the future of SI programs, it will be critical that they provide districts with resources necessary to provide both remedial and enrichment programs. Further, as districts make strides to strengthen access to Career/Technical Education (CTE) programs, summer provides an excellent opportunity to expose students to CTE courses beyond the curriculum they receive in the regular school year.

Districts should also consider providing summer school programs in a shortened week. The Chaffey Jt. Union High School District offers remediation-based summer school four days a week. The district structured summer school in this fashion in order to increase

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander, K.L., and Entwisle, D.R. (1996). Schools and children at risk. In A. Booth, & J.F. Dunn (Eds.). Family school links: How do they affect educational outcomes? (pp. 67-89). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum

<sup>2</sup>Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227-268.

student attendance and attract more teachers to deliver instruction. The summer program is a longer day, but one less day in the week. This has resulted in some cost savings in terms of provision of lunches and electricity/maintenance costs. They have also been able to lower class size in the summer school programs by supplementing their SI with Title I dollars.

### **Case Study**—Summer school in Natomas USD

School board members of the Natomas Unified School District have long been engaged and supportive of summer school programs. Although summer school in Natomas is expensive for the district, the board views this program as a vital expense. The program is primarily funded with state supplemental instruction funds but also is supported using General Fund, CAHSEE Intensive Instruction and Services funding and Title 1 dollars. District staff receive direction from the board to focus on providing high-quality programming rather than being fiscally conservative. Very few students repeat summer school the following summer because they are often caught up to grade level.

Each student recommended for retention, behind in credits or at-risk for not passing the CAHSEE is reviewed by teachers, school counselors and administrators. The student's individual needs are addressed in summer school through low student-to-staff ratios. Principals and teachers also call the homes of students who were recommended for summer school if they do not attend after the first day. On the second or third day, parents are notified that the student may be held back a grade. If the student still does not attend, the next student on the waiting list is quickly put into the class.

Although student enrollment has doubled in size over the last seven years in the district, no new summer school sites have been added. This is due in large part to the superintendent and governing board's deliberate decision to offer summer school programs only for remediation. Each September, the board receives a report from the previous summer school principal. This report includes: detailed data on student achievement from pre and post assessments, the strategies that made the program successful and the resources needed to improve the next summer's program. Both a tool for the board and the incoming summer school principal, this report has proven to be an invaluable tool. In the future, Natomas USD board members will examine expanding summer school classes for all students but will likely continue offering only remediation summer school over the next several years.

## Before and afterschool programs

Before and afterschool programs in California have grown over the last decade due, in part, to the increased focus on academic outcomes and concerns over student safety. Evaluations of California afterschool programs have found positive impacts on student achievement, attendance, behavior and reductions in grade retention. Research also suggests that children and youth are most likely to be victims or perpetrators of crime during the hours of three and six, after school ends. Many communities have invested in these programs to support and refine the learning that occurs during a student's regular school day and to help ensure the safety of children and youth afterschool.

### *Case Study*—Los Arcos Learning Center

The Los Arcos Learning Center, a community-based education program, uses highly qualified staff and technology-driven instruction to offer students between the ages of five and thirteen an opportunity to develop English language skills and academic proficiency after regular school hours. It was created to close the academic achievement gap between English learners and the other students in the school. Since Los Arcos opened in the fall of 2003, the academic achievement gap has been reduced by 30 percent. A nationally published review based on 2004-05 data showed that 61.8 percent of students who attended Los Arcos met their English language growth target while only 50.8 percent of the students who did not attend Los Arcos met their English language growth target. The average attendance rate is over 90 percent. The district has used a variety of funding sources to support the program, including SI, Title I, English Learner Acquisition Program, Title III and a variety of grants. Los Arcos also partners with AutoSkill International, LeapFrog SchoolHouse, Stanislaus County Redevelopment Agency (through a community development block grant) and United Way.

### **Case Study—Pro-Youth HEART**

The Homework, Enrichment, Acceleration, Recreation, Teamwork (HEART) Afterschool Program was established in response to children’s requests for a safe place to be afterschool. Located in Tulare County, this afterschool program serves 3,100 kindergarten through sixth grade students at eighteen sites. The non-profit organization, Pro-Youth partners with four local school districts to provide high-quality programming with the following components: homework assistance, literacy development and enrichment activities. Pro-Youth HEART stemmed directly from children and community input and local donations allowed the non-profit organization to carefully and deliberately create a research-based program. Pro-Youth HEART is now funded primarily by the 21st Century Community Learning Center and After School Education and Safety grant programs.

*For more information [www.proyouthheart.com](http://www.proyouthheart.com)*

### **Case Study—Sacramento START**

Sacramento START is a public/private collaboration that is working to build the capacity of children to succeed academically and socially while reconnecting families and neighborhoods with schools. A partnership among the city of Sacramento and six local school districts, Students Today Achieving Results for Tomorrow (START) credits much of its success to multiple and diverse partners. Serving 6,000 elementary students daily at forty-two sites, START continues to provide high-quality programming in the Sacramento metropolitan area.

*For more information [www.sacstart.org](http://www.sacstart.org)*

## Current law

There are a number of funding sources, federal, state and local, that are used to support before and afterschool programs. The three largest funding sources in California are the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) Program, the 21st Century High School After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens Program (ASSETs) and the After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program.

### **21st Century Community Learning Center Program and the 21st Century High School After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens Program**

The 21st Century program was first implemented under the Improving Classroom Education Act (1996), and was reauthorized under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001). Initially these five year, one-time grants were awarded from the US Department of Education and supported a variety of community services, such as literacy education, senior citizen programs, afterschool programs, parent education programs, integrated services, summer or weekend programs, nutrition programs, expanded library services, etc.

Under NCLB, the 21st Century program became focused primarily on academic goals and states were given the discretion to prioritize how the funding would be spent. California created an afterschool program that mirrored the state's existing ASES Program, except that some funding was set aside to support high school afterschool programs (ASSETs) and to provide optional direct grants that can be used for transportation and to increase program accessibility for special education students and English Language Learners.

### **After School Education and Safety Program and Proposition 49**

In 1998, California adopted SB 1756 (Lockyer), the After School Education and Safety (ASES) program. A before-school component was added to the program in 2001 (AB 6, Cardenas). These three-year renewable grants can be used in eligible elementary, middle and charter schools to provide academic support and enrichment opportunities for students outside traditional school hours. Funding for ASES is based on student attendance. Districts, cities and counties are prioritized to receive funds if they serve students at elementary or middle schools where at least fifty percent of the student population is identified as low socioeconomic status. The ASES program also requires a local match of one third.

The 2006-07 fiscal year marked the beginning of a major expansion in before and afterschool programs in California because of Proposition 49. In 2002, Proposition 49 was passed by the California electorate. The initiative requires the state to spend \$550 million on afterschool programs using the existing After School Education and Safety Program (ASES) model. The state was required to meet this fund threshold once the state's non-Proposition 98 funding grew by \$1.5 billion above the 2001

budget amount. In the 2006-07 fiscal year the budget reached the threshold and the state fully funded ASES. Elementary school programs can receive up to \$112,500 for elementary and \$150,000 for middle school. Before-school maximum grant amounts are available up to \$37,500 for elementary and \$49,000 for middle school.

*Please note: receiving grants through the ASES program does not imply the district is a Special Educational Service provider pursuant to NCLB.*

### **Additional programs**

LA's BEST Afterschool Enrichment Program  
[www.lasbest.org](http://www.lasbest.org)

Oakland Community Afterschool Alliance  
[www.oaklandafterschool.org](http://www.oaklandafterschool.org)

The San Diego Afterschool Consortium  
[www.thechildrensinitiative.org](http://www.thechildrensinitiative.org)

San Francisco Beacon Initiative  
[www.sfbeacon.org](http://www.sfbeacon.org)

San Jose Afterschool  
[www.sanjoseca.gov/prns/afterschool.asp](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/prns/afterschool.asp)

## **Fifth year senior year**

Many students, particularly in light of the challenges in passing the California High School Exit Exam, will be unable to complete high school with a diploma in four years. This is particularly true for students who are English learners. Districts have the flexibility to encourage those students to continue their senior year into a fifth year of high school in order to maximize instructional opportunities.

In 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law AB 347 (Nara). This urgency bill requires program funds from the intensive instruction and services program to be used to serve students who could not pass the CAHSEE for an additional two years beyond their 12th grade year. This bill satisfies the requirements of the settlement of *Valenzuela vs. O'Connell*.

## Full-day kindergarten

While districts do not receive additional funds to operate kindergarten programs beyond the current four hour maximum, many districts are expanding their kindergarten program to mirror the schedule of the other grades at the school. This is an opportunity for districts to ensure that the kindergarten curriculum is not only rich in reading and math instruction, but also has strong elements of science, art and physical activity.

State law prohibits extended day kindergarten unless a district formally adopts a policy allowing a program beyond the four-hour maximum. In doing so, the district must ensure that the kindergarten program will not exceed the length of the day of the other primary grades and that there are ample opportunities for rest and recreation.

### A snapshot of full-day kindergarten in the United States

- Sixteen states define full-day kindergarten in statute.
- Nine states require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten.
- Two states require children to attend full-day kindergarten.

*Source: Full-Day Kindergarten: A Study of State Policies in the United States. The Education Commission of the States. June 2005. [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)*

## Preschool as an opportunity to maximize instructional opportunities

The brain development of a preschool-age child is rapid and dynamic. Research suggests that providing high-quality preschool program opportunities for young children can have a profound, positive impact on their readiness for school and beyond. Recent research has also found that high-quality preschool programs have a positive return on the public's investment. In spite of this research, almost half of all children in California are not enrolled in preschool programs.

CSBA has developed a web-based resource guide for board members and educational leaders to assist them in implementing or expanding preschool programs in their districts. This comprehensive guide is available at [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org).

## Preschool outreach to minority populations

In order to involve culturally and linguistically diverse parents in preschool programs, school staff must provide tools to establish successful partnerships. Programs may consider developing policies to encourage the promotion of positive school-home partnerships that are responsive to the diverse populations they serve. Through various training and professional development opportunities, teachers and staff can learn how to establish a continuous communication process with families so a desired level of parental involvement can be achieved. The preschool program may wish to offer training to parents on how to best use their talents to help their children succeed in the school environment. Parent participation fosters the continuance of and support for the preschool program practices.<sup>3</sup> Encourage parents to attend orientation sessions, indoor and outdoor activities and special trips. Finally, efforts should focus on moving from more traditional parental involvement activities to establishing true partnerships in which both school personnel and parents learn from each other and find ways in which they can mutually support their efforts of educating children.<sup>4</sup>

### Specific outreach suggestions

- Discuss childcare options with working parents. Provide information and referral to appropriate wraparound care programs.
- Introduce parents to other parents of children in the program. Establish a buddy system between “old” and “new” parents.
- Provide parent orientation packages including: the child’s schedule, transportation procedures, required school forms, food service and other program information.
- Have multiple points of entry to the preschool program including schools, human services organizations, community centers, civic organizations, employers, and the media.

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<sup>3</sup> Preschool Criteria for a Preschool Program, Western Association of Schools & Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Schools. 2000. [http://www.acswasc.org/pdf\\_general/PreschoolCriteria2000Supplement.pdf](http://www.acswasc.org/pdf_general/PreschoolCriteria2000Supplement.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Involvement of Parents of Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds, Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium. [www.maec.org/parntlep.html](http://www.maec.org/parntlep.html)

## Healthy students

Every day that a student misses school is a lost day of instruction. Districts can dramatically increase instructional time for students by supporting efforts to ensure that students are healthy, present and ready to learn.

School boards should access CSBA's resource guide, "Successful Students Through Healthy Foods and Fitness Policies," which can be ordered through [www.csba.org](http://www.csba.org). Boards should also examine their own oral health policies to ensure that students are receiving oral health screenings before entering school.

### Healthy Start Programs: Services for Children, Youth and Families

Each local Healthy Start initiative provides comprehensive school-integrated services and activities to meet the desired results identified for Healthy Start children, youth, and families. These services and activities may include:

#### **Academic/education (tutoring, mentoring, dropout prevention, adult education, and staff training)**

- Youth Development Services (tutoring, employment, community services, recreation, and sports)
- Family Support (child protection, parenting education, English as a second language (ESL), citizenship classes, child care, case management, child abuse prevention, and family advocacy)
- Basic Needs (supplemental food, nutrition education services, clothing, shelter/housing, transportation, and legal assistance)
- Medical/Health Care (vision, hearing, dental, CHDP, acute care, preventive health care, and health insurance)
- Mental Health Care and Counseling (therapy, support groups, and substance abuse prevention)
- Employment (career counseling, job placement, economic security, job preparation and development)

*Note: Healthy Start does not necessarily pay for these services. Rather, Healthy Start coordinates integrated service delivery which links children and families to needed supports and services.*

**Healthy Start is designed to serve children, their family members, and the community. The goals of Healthy Start include:**

- Ensuring that each child receives the physical, emotional, and intellectual support that he or she needs—in school, at home, and in the community—to learn well.
- Building the capacity of students and parents to be participants, leaders, and decision-makers in their communities.
- Helping schools and other child and family-serving agencies to recognize, streamline, and integrate their programs to provide more effective support to children and their families.

### **California's Healthy Start Evaluation Results**

Evaluation results\* show a strong initiative that offers positive support and guidance for students and families, especially those most in need. Healthy Start schools show increases in test scores, improvements in children's classroom behavior, and a greater parent involvement in school activities.

### **School-wide Results**

Statistically significant school wide improvements were achieved including:

- Standardized tests scores for grades one through three increased significantly, as compared to similar schools without Healthy Start.
- Middle and high school students most in need showed nearly a 50 percent increase in grade point averages.
- Parent participation increased for all school activities.
- Student mobility was reduced.

### **Trends at Healthy Start sites included:**

- Decrease in school violence.
- Decrease in violence and child abuse in homes.
- Improvement in self-concept and decrease in drug use.
- For every state dollar provided, Healthy Start returns an estimated \$4 in otherwise untapped local, county, and federal funds.

*Excerpted from [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)*



## **Enhancing the Quality of Existing Instructional Time**

## Effective use of school schedules to enhance learning

With the increased focus on accountability, many districts are taking a creative look at the use of instructional time by adjusting traditional schedules. In order to be innovative, districts will need flexibility and some additional funding for schedule planning.

In recent years, many districts have been successful in rearranging the traditional district calendar. These changes may be implemented with little to no additional costs, but it is important to keep in mind that communication with faculty, parents and the community when developing these schedule modifications is crucial. Some districts have moved away from the lengthy summer break in favor of a shorter summer with more time off during the school year. In most cases, the impetus for this change comes from the research that demonstrates significant summer learning loss. Districts may want to make this adjustment in the schedule slowly, perhaps changing by only one week each year so that families and faculty can acclimate to the new schedule. See sidebar, Summer learning loss and the achievement gap.

### Summer learning loss and the achievement gap

“Research demonstrates that all students experience significant learning losses in procedural and factual knowledge during the summer months. Studies also show that the magnitude of summer learning loss varies significantly by grade level, subject matter, and family income. Most importantly, research identifies the cumulative effect of summer learning differences as a primary cause of widening in-school achievement gaps between students by family income.”

*For more information, Center for Summer Learning, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University, [www.jhu.edu/teachbaltimore/index.html](http://www.jhu.edu/teachbaltimore/index.html)*

By shortening the summer vacation, districts may take longer breaks throughout the year. Below are examples of time off from modified district calendars throughout the state.

- A full week for the Thanksgiving holiday
- Two to four weeks for the Winter holidays
- A full week in February for President’s Day
- Two weeks for Spring break

Some districts have changed their master calendars to more closely mirror neighboring districts, vacation patterns for immigrant and transient populations, local college schedules and other relevant community activities. An early start to the school year in August allows a full year of study for high school students taking advanced placement exams. Other districts and staff have worked to redesign school calendars to allow for staff collaboration time. A handful of school districts have modified their calendars to a single track, year round schedule that allows shorter breaks useful for student interventions. At many elementary schools, instructional minutes are banked by teaching longer days thus freeing up time for common planning weekly or monthly. Middle and high schools can plan for teachers of the same discipline or grade level to share the same prep periods. This type of change must include certificated staff input and considerations and be unique to the community's needs. Whether the idea for common planning time stemmed from the board, administrators or teachers, all parties must have buy-in to ensure the time allotted is used for quality planning and collaboration.

## Examine block scheduling

For many high school teachers and students, the traditional 40-50 minute periods simply do not allow enough time for a topic to be introduced, explored and practiced. Numerous high schools have experimented with what is commonly referred to as block scheduling. While most California high schools offer six or seven 40-50 minute periods a day, block schedules teach only four. The blocks each are offered for 90 or more minutes, permitting teachers and students additional time to cover subjects in an in depth manner. Each day of the week the blocks are offered in a different order, or rotated. Classes change at the semester allowing students to take eight subjects per school year.

Research has been largely inconclusive and opinions are mixed about the effects of block scheduling. Proponents suggest students have more time to examine subjects of interest. The Public Policy Institute of California reports, "Longer blocks of instruction have been shown to increase student learning, particularly for low-performing students." Critics point to scheduling nuances such as an increase of missed instructional time for students pulled out for athletics, other activities and services. Also, without careful planning, students may not take a course in a particular subject for an entire year. For example, if a freshman student takes algebra during their first semester, they may not be enrolled in math again until the second semester of the sophomore year.

In school districts where block scheduling has been implemented in brand new high schools, teachers, students and parents anecdotally report they prefer the schedule. Often, when block scheduling is introduced at an existing high school, the new schedule is often met with at least some initial resistance.

## Consider a later start time at the high school level

In the fall of 1997, Minneapolis Public Schools' elementary, middle and high schools adopted new, later start time changes based on research done by the University of Minnesota and the National Sleep Foundation. "Two Minneapolis-area school districts decided to shift secondary school start times to 8:30 a.m. or later based on emerging medical research showing adolescents have a natural sleep pattern that lead to a late-to-bed, late-to-rise cycle. From the onset of puberty until late teen years, the brain chemical melatonin, which is responsible for sleepiness, is secreted from approximately 11 p.m. until approximately 8 a.m., nine hours later. Typical youth are not able to fall asleep much before 11 p.m. and their brains will remain in sleep mode until about 8 a.m., regardless of what time they go to bed."<sup>5</sup> Teachers noticed students were more alert during the first two periods of the school day. Students overall polled "liked" starting later in the day. However, in urban areas, there were more problems and conflicts of time associated with the later start time and extracurricular activities. These problems included logistical issues such as busing, athletics, and childcare for younger students.

## Bus scheduling

As a district considers minor or significant changes to the yearly calendar or daily schedule, it will need to factor the costs and logistics of transporting students. In some cases, implementing a later start time for high school students may allow the same bus to run first to the elementary school and then to a high school thus lowering costs. However, costs may increase if a district establishes an afterschool program and finds it needs to run a bus at the end of the regular school day and another bus at the end of the afterschool program. Savings may be found by coordinating transportation services with other local districts and charging parent fees. In many areas, providing transportation is vital to student attendance in regular or special programs. When challenged with escalating costs of providing transportation to summer school, a small school district in El Dorado County, Mother Lode ESD, offered classes Monday through Thursday. The district was able to save \$8000 for every Friday the schools were closed and buses did not run.

## Collective bargaining is an opportunity, not a predicament

In order for a district to accommodate changes in the schedule, it may need to negotiate with local bargaining units. Collective bargaining may serve as a means to help districts achieve the district vision. Since the board's goal in collective bargaining is to obtain the greatest educational return for the agreement made, it is necessary to have clear instructional goals and priorities established. Boards must begin by understanding the collective bargaining process and become knowledgeable about the history of

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<sup>5</sup> "Later start times for high school students." The College of Education & Human Development, University of Minnesota. 1.

negotiations in the district. It will be to the board's advantage to truly understand the district's rights and flexibilities in terms of contracts.

Whether the district is bargaining to increase the number of instructional minutes or rearranging existing time, this negotiation will likely involve compromise. Some schedule changes may be accomplished without a new contract. For example, at the middle and high school level a district may wish to offer an extra period before the regular school day ("zero period") for certain music, enrichment, or remediation courses. A trade off for classroom teachers in this scenario could include extra pay or the flexibility to include a prep period during the regular school day. Other more significant changes such as adding additional days to the school calendar or shifting the daily schedule to allow for common planning time may require contract negotiations. In many cases, these instructional changes will incur an additional cost for the district. A district must take into account the fiscal realities in conjunction with the district vision.

## **Enhancing time on task**

Short of adding additional minutes or days to the school year, districts can also be very deliberative about how to maximize the instructional time they currently have. There are several important ways that districts can implement such strategies:

### **Integrate a variety of academic content areas in order to utilize the same number of instructional minutes to teach more than one subject**

For example, with some creative planning math lessons can be incorporated into a physical education activity; reading comprehension strategies can be integrated into a science lesson. Encourage staff collaboration and create common planning time for teachers across disciplines.

### **Minimize administrative disruptions**

Gather information from site administrators, teachers and parents regarding the frequency and nature of disruptions. If necessary, develop strategies to reduce those interruptions and consider developing district guidelines/policies.

### **Provide ongoing professional development to help hone the skills of teachers so that they can more effectively deliver instruction to their students**

Research and analyze the professional development opportunities available to the district and begin to offer those trainings to district staff. The board can demonstrate the importance of this training by prioritizing funding, incorporating suggestions from staff and offering the training curriculum through multiple delivery methods. If possible, board members should also consider attending these professional development opportunities.

**Enhance articulation with feeder districts, as well as public and private preschool programs, to ensure that student expectations are consistent across the grade spans.**

The board can set direction by establishing regular meetings of board members, teachers and appropriate district staff from the feeder districts in a given area. The board can also reach out to private preschool providers to communicate expectations. Establishing a formalized structure can encourage collaboration. When the group agrees upon a set of recommendations and common expectations they should be shared with the board, staff, parents and other community members.

**Incorporate the Professional Standards for the Teaching Profession into teacher evaluations.**

There are components of the evaluation process that must be bargained, such as frequency and discipline associated with the evaluation. However, many aspects of the evaluation should not be bargained, such as the evaluation instrument and the content of the evaluation form. Districts should incorporate the Professional Standards for the Teaching Profession into the evaluation and should not negotiate them in the collective bargaining process.

## *Case study*

The San Joaquin County Office of Education's Regional System of District and School Support (RSDSS) conducts evaluations on how instructional time is used in schools to help schools and districts determine if instructional time is productive and on-task. They have developed an Instructional Time Survey that evaluates both the quality of instruction as well as the amount of instructional time that is not being used for instruction purposes. The RSDSS identifies a variety of examples of activities that are off task, such as:

- Students disengaged from the lesson (e.g., talking or daydreaming)
- Teachers involved in “administrivia” (lunch count, attendance, homework collection) while students are not engaged in a learning task
- Instruction stopped to deal with student discipline
- Students in transition and not engaged in a learning task
- Students watching video that is unrelated to lesson objectives
- School-wide announcements

By evaluating instructional time and asking staff at all levels to be more deliberate about how to minimize classroom disruptions and use learning activities during essential administrative time, the San Joaquin County RSDSS has been successful in helping schools enhance time on task, which has helped improve student achievement as evidenced by the state's assessment system.

## Legislative priorities

As the Legislature examine priorities for instructional time, additional financial resources will be necessary. Beyond those resources, specific statutory issues must be addressed.

*Specifically:*

- Eliminate the specificity that after school programs be limited to the hours between 3 and 6, particularly in rural and remote communities because the length of transportation makes extending after school hours until 6 p.m. prohibitive.
- Graduation rates must include students who receive a diploma after their fourth year of high school.
- SI should be fully funded, less restrictive and expanded to include enrichment programs.
- Prioritize extended day funding for Program Improvement schools.
- Fully fund full-day kindergarten

## Resources

California Department of Education After School Education and Safety Program  
[www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as/)

California Department of Education California's ASES Program Fully Funded in 06-07  
[www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as/ases06fundingfaq.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/as/ases06fundingfaq.asp)

California Department of Education Frequently Asked Questions—Supplemental Instruction  
[www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/pr/faqs.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/pr/faqs.asp)

Children Now  
[www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)

Fairchild, R. and Boulay, M. (2002). *What if Summer Learning Loss Were an Education Policy Priority?* Presentation for the 24th Annual APPAM Research Conference. Baltimore, MD.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids  
[www.fightcrime.org/ca](http://www.fightcrime.org/ca)

For subscribers only, GAMUT Online  
[www.gamutonline.net](http://www.gamutonline.net)

FowlerHoffman, LLC:  
[www.fowlerhoffman.info/case\\_studies.htm](http://www.fowlerhoffman.info/case_studies.htm)

National School Boards Association Extended-Day Learning Opportunities Program  
[www.nsba.org/site/page\\_EDLO.asp?](http://www.nsba.org/site/page_EDLO.asp?)

National School Lunch Program Afterschool Programs  
[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Afterschool/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Afterschool/default.htm)

PPIC, "Research Brief: The Success of San Diego School Reforms Could Serve as a Blueprint for the State," October 2005.

Preschool Criteria for a Preschool Program. Western Association of Schools & Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Schools. 2000.  
[www.acswasc.org](http://www.acswasc.org)