



Expanding Learning Opportunities Across the Country: Embracing Multiple Approaches and Funding Sources

Since 1998, 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) funds have supported expanded learning opportunities, providing afterschool, before-school and summer programs for children across America. Today 21st CCLC programs serve 1.5 million children nationwide. These programs do more than increase the amount of time for learning; they expand learning opportunities by bringing together community resources that expose kids to new subjects and teachers, as well as hands-on, real world approaches to learning. Over the past 12 years, these programs have grown stronger and stronger, as they must compete for both funds and attendees. Programs need to demonstrate positive outcomes to attract funders and parents, while also keeping their consumers, children and older youth interested and engaged. As a result, incredible innovations in teaching and learning are occurring in afterschool programs around the country. Not surprisingly, research shows that kids who participate in high quality afterschool programs stay in school longer and perform better in school than their peers who do not participate. And, when schools and afterschool programs partner to support student success, we all benefit.

Some are calling for the elimination of the current 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, replacing it with a narrow extended day model that adds hours to the school day. This proposal is ill-advised, threatening to unravel the afterschool programs that millions of kids, parents and communities rely on every day. Emerging expanded learning time (ELT) programs show real promise, providing an exciting opportunity to tap the lessons of afterschool for innovative school reform. But that does not mean we should destroy a network of proven afterschool programs, highly valued by their communities.

With more than 15 million children unsupervised after school each day, now is the time to increase funding for afterschool, not divert this critical funding source.

If we are serious about providing the supports kids and families need today, and drastically expanding learning opportunities for youth nationwide, we need to provide resources for both proven afterschool programs and new expanded learning time efforts. Funding for 21st CCLC should be increased to create more quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities that supplement the learning that happens during the regular school day. Expanded learning time may be best funded through Title 1, an area targeted for many of the new education reform strategies, or through a separate dedicated funding stream.

Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) help improve outcomes for children by providing expanded academic enrichment and engagement, leveraging community resources to offer instruction and experiential learning opportunities in core and other subjects. ELOs incorporate strategies such as hands-on learning, working in teams and problem-solving to contribute to a well-rounded education. Services may be delivered through a variety of approaches, including afterschool, before school, summer and extended day, week or year programs. Partnerships between schools and community organizations are at the core of strong ELOs.

What is the difference between afterschool and extended day or expanded learning time (ELT)? Both provide more learning time, but are at very different stages of development.

An afterschool or summer program typically grows out of community need. It may be located at a school, or off-site, but with a school link. It may be overseen primarily by a community organization or a school, with programs built on a school-community partnership. Programs provide a variety of activities, but an engaging, hands-on learning approach and less formal environment are common across all programs. Afterschool and summer programs have over a decade of research illustrating positive outcomes, and they are well understood and supported by the public.

Expanded learning time (ELT) is an emerging concept that begins with a school site extending its daily hours or school year. The models currently being tested take many forms, from simply increased classroom time, or an extended day, to more innovative models that build off the successes of afterschool programs and leverage the resources of community partners. The research varies by model and is early in its development. The variance of models makes it hard to gauge public support; however, in general, parents are not widely supportive of more classroom time.

Additionally, the research base on quality afterschool and summer practices should be used to inform any future effort to expand the learning day/year, and expanded learning should draw on the resources and expertise of community partners. ELT should not simply mandate the addition of more instructional time to the school day because doing so would mean tossing aside a unique opportunity to innovate and achieve real change. We also cannot assume that creating longer school days in a handful of districts will diminish the need for afterschool and summer programs, and we must understand that repurposing 21st CCLC funds to support ELT alone would leave districts that do not receive funds to extend the day without any support for critical afterschool services.

This brief paper provides a summary of the research demonstrating the effectiveness of 21st CCLC funded afterschool programs nationwide, and outlines the potential of emerging expanded learning time models, which are informed by the successes of effective before-school, afterschool and summer programs. The afterschool community supports new models that use expanded time to provide an enriched curriculum and access to community partners. What happens during the added time is key to truly expanding learning.

21st CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER RESEARCH: DELIVERING RESULTS FOR STUDENTS IN COMMUNITIES NATIONWIDE

- The current 4,023 21st CCLC grants serve 1.8 million children and youth before school, after school and during the summer in 10,339 school-based and community-based centers across the country.
- Ninety-four percent of 21st CCLC centers are open four or more days per week and 76 percent of centers are open at least 11 hours per week. Centers are open for an average of 14.7 hours per week.
- The average annual cost per student ranges from \$627 to \$1,254.
- The average 21st CCLC grant recipient has six partners. Schools, CBOS, colleges, universities, faith based partners and other key community stakeholders are all eligible to be the lead partner on a grant application.
- About three in five lead grantees are school districts and about one in five grantees are community-based organizations. **One hundred percent of 21st CCLCs consist of partnerships among schools and community based organizations.**¹
- Nine in ten 21st CCLCs are located in school buildings and programs are well-aligned with the school day. More than half of 21st CCLC programs are staffed primarily by certified teachers or by a combination of school-day teachers and other nonteaching school-day staff who have college degrees.²
- 21st CCLC funded afterschool programs offer a broad array of additional services designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program, such as: drug and violence prevention programs, counseling and mentoring programs, art, music, and recreation and enrichment opportunities that build STEM skills and interest.

¹ Learning Point Associates (2005-2009) *21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Profile and Performance Information Collection System (PPICS)*. Retrieved from <http://ppics.learningpt.org/ppicsnet/public/default.aspx>

² Learning Point Associates (2007). *21st century community learning centers (21st CCLC) analytic support for evaluation and program monitoring: An overview of the 21st CCLC program: 2005–06*. Retrieved February 2010, from http://ppics.learningpt.org/PPICSNet/userguide/AnnualReports/AR_Year3.pdf

- 21st CCLC funding has been a major factor in helping to close the socioeconomic gap in afterschool participation. While afterschool participation rates have increased at every level of family income nationwide, lowest income youth have shown the greatest increase in participation.³
- While national data find that 41 percent of children in afterschool programs are low-income, more than half of 21st CCLC participants are low-income. Furthermore, 52 percent of the children who would participate in afterschool programs if they were available are from low-income households.⁴
- Annual performance report data from 21st CCLC grantees across the country demonstrate that regular attendees improve their reading (43 percent) and math grades (49 percent).
- Students who attend 21st CCLC programs regularly are more likely to improve their grades, test scores and overall academic behavior. More mature 21st CCLC programs have greater rates of regular attendance and therefore are more effective in improving students' academic behavior.⁵
- The Promising Afterschool Programs Study, a study of about 3,000 low-income, ethnically-diverse elementary and middle school students, found that those who regularly attended high-quality programs (including programs funded by 21st CCLC) over two years demonstrated gains of up to 20 percentiles and 12 percentiles in standardized math test scores respectively, compared to their peers who were routinely unsupervised during the afterschool hours.⁶
- Elementary school students attending LA's BEST afterschool program—a program funded in part by 21st CCLC—improved their regular school day attendance and reported higher aspirations regarding finishing school and going to college. Additionally, LA's BEST participants are 20 percent less likely to drop out of school and 30 percent less likely to participate in criminal activities compared to matched nonparticipants.⁷

EXPANDED LEARNING TIME MODELS SHOULD BUILD OFF THE LESSONS OF AFTERSCHOOL, BUT CAN'T REPLACE IT

The locally-driven, flexible and voluntary nature of today's afterschool and summer programs has led to creative innovations in teaching and learning. In fact afterschool programs today go well beyond keeping children safe; afterschool participants attend school more often, do better in school and develop essential skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork.⁸ In afterschool, children are continually learning, whether working with a museum to build rockets, being introduced to Shakespeare through

³ Harvard Family Research Project (2006, March). *What Are Kids Getting Into These Days?: Demographic Differences in Youth Out-of-School Time Participation*. Retrieved February 2010, from www.hfrp.org/content/.11074/.full_report_demographic_diff.pdf

⁴ Afterschool Alliance (2009). *America After 3PM*. Retrieved from <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM.cfm>

⁵ Learning Point Associates (2007). *21st century community learning centers (21st CCLC) analytic support for evaluation and program monitoring: An overview of the 21st CCLC program: 2005–06*. Retrieved February 2010, from http://ppics.learningpt.org/PPICSNet/userguide/AnnualReports/AR_Year3.pdf

⁶ Vandell, D.L., Reisner, E.R., Brown, B.B., Dadisman, K., Pierce, K.M., & Lee, D. (2004). *The study of promising after-school programs: Descriptive report of the promising programs*. Policy Studies Associates, Inc. Retrieved June 16, 2006, from <http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/Promising%20Programs%20FINAL.pdf>

⁷ Goldschmidt, P., & Huang, D. (2007). *The long-term effects of after-school programming on educational adjustment and juvenile crime: A study of the LA's BEST after-school program*. Los Angeles: UCLA, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.

⁸ Afterschool Alliance (2008, August). *Evaluations Backgrounder: A Summary of Formal Evaluations of Afterschool Programs' Impact on Behavior, Safety and Family Life*. Retrieved from, http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Evaluations%20Backgrounder%20Behavior_08_FINAL.pdf

theater, mastering a non-school subject (like Mandarin) to receive credit toward graduation, or addressing a local problem like mosquito infestation. Community partners, such as youth groups, businesses, museums, universities, faith based institutions and even health care providers, bring a variety of resources and expertise, from snacks to outdoor activities to content not available during the traditional school day. More and more research demonstrates the success of quality afterschool programs in improving academic, social and behavioral development.⁹

The data on afterschool and summer provide a strong argument for continuing to expand and increase access to these programs, and for tapping their best practices to inform education reform and shape expanded learning time strategies. Merely adding more time to a school that is already struggling could lead to disaster (faster drop-outs and more boredom). But taking the opportunity to expand the school day and year by tapping community resources, and getting students excited about learning in a more informal, hands-on environment holds great promise. The key is content and delivery. The lessons learned by the afterschool community over the past 12 years can help ensure that new school reform models adding time to the school day are successful, creating the rare opportunity to both innovate and build off a strong research base.

While expanded learning time is a promising new model, it does not mean that proven, effective afterschool programs are no longer needed. Diverting afterschool dollars to a new purpose would result in a loss of services, jobs and opportunities for innovation in learning.

It is concerning that some proponents of a longer school day are pressing to replace 21st Century Community Learning Centers and instead direct afterschool and summer learning funding to an extended school day, similar to the model currently being implemented in Massachusetts. While it is clear that kids need more time for learning, it is not clear that the model proposed will actually provide the kind of learning that kids need most. Furthermore, beyond the loss of the rich experiences and critical services that the current 21st CCLC model provides children and families nationwide, there are several reasons why we should proceed cautiously with expanding ELT nationwide, especially at the expense of a proven initiative that works. It is also imperative that we look beyond the Massachusetts model to promising models in other states like New York and Rhode Island where community partners are playing a more integrated role in the development and implementation of a longer school day:

- Afterschool programs are a lifeline for working families, inspiring learning during the hours when parents are at work and children and youth are most likely to engage in inappropriate behavior when not supervised. The Massachusetts model provides fewer hours of expanded learning for the same or higher cost than afterschool programs. Most sites in the pilot ELT program in Massachusetts end by 3:30 or 4 p.m., meaning proven, effective afterschool programs are still needed to fill the gap until 6 pm, when most parents return home from work.
- Diverting funds from 21st CCLC afterschool programs to a Massachusetts style longer school day will result in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs as funding currently being used to pay staff and teachers from the community will instead be used exclusively to provide additional pay and benefits to current school staff.
- ELT is new and the current data on expanded learning time has not shown conclusive evidence of beneficial results for students.

⁹ Afterschool Alliance (2008, July). *Afterschool Alliance Backgrounder: Formal Evaluations of the Academic Impact of Afterschool Programs*. Retrieved from, http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Evaluations%20Backgrounder%20Academic_08_FINAL.pdf

- While broadening enrichment opportunities is a stated goal, much more of the emphasis and nearly all the funding goes to increased instructional time, rather than enrichment activities and hands-on learning in the Massachusetts model.
- The model of more classroom time has been shown to work for some, but not all students. A key concern is special needs students, who appear to suffer with behavioral issues under more classroom time. Teachers and students also report lower attention spans and increased fatigue in the Massachusetts model.¹⁰
- In Massachusetts, community partners and resources are largely left on the sidelines, only participating if they can identify their own source of funding to contribute.
- Massachusetts has a state funded afterschool initiative, in addition to its state funded extended school day initiative, because Massachusetts lawmakers recognize that one model for expanding learning opportunities does not work in all communities. Among the handful of states that have launched longer school day initiatives in recent years, New York, Rhode Island and Hawaii have separate afterschool initiatives to meet the diverse needs of communities and families in their states.

WHAT MAKES A QUALITY EXPANDED LEARNING TIME (ELT) MODEL

Enabling schools and community partners to work together to design an expanded learning day around local needs should be inherent in any ELT initiative. Furthermore, we need to recognize that many of the communities using expanded learning time initiatives still need afterschool, before-school and summer programs to fill the gap between work and school schedules. And, as we are learning in Massachusetts, communities need to have options for expanding learning opportunities, including both proven, effective afterschool programs and expanded day initiatives. Many schools in Massachusetts have chosen not to apply for extended day funding and at least 3 schools have dropped their extended day initiative after trying it out and not finding it helpful in meeting their goals. With more than 18 million kids in need of afterschool learning opportunities, there is room to support a variety of approaches to expanding learning for children.

There are lessons to be learned from states and communities piloting longer school day models. In New York City, a three-year demonstration project seeks to expand learning time by at least 30 percent in 10 New York City public and middle schools, with more than 2,300 students enrolled. The After-School Corporation (TASC) manages the project, which launched in the 2008-09 school year, in partnership with the New York City Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Community Development. The goal is to improve the academic achievement of young people while supporting their healthy social, physical, creative and civic development. The ELT/NYC project helps school leaders reorganize their schools to integrate their existing resources with those of partnering community-based organizations, with additional funds raised from public and private sources. Each school gathers teachers, parents and community partners under the principal's leadership to chart curriculum and activities tailored to the school's goals for its students. Learning time is expanded through a combination of a longer school day and afterschool programs, which together provide services until 6 p.m. every day school is in session to meet the needs of working parents.¹¹

¹⁰ ABT Associates, Inc. (2009, March 26). *Evaluation of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative: Year Two Report 2007-2008*. Retrieved February 2010, from http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/MA-ELT_Year_2_Report_Final_3-26-09.pdf

¹¹ The After-school Corporation (2009, August 18). *ELT: Expanding and Enriching Learning Time for All*. Retrieved February 25, 2010, from <http://www.tascorp.org/content/document/detail/2575/>

In Rhode Island, communities are in the very early stages of designing ELT initiatives. The plans are being developed locally by schools and community based partners, who are working together to design expanded learning time models that meet the needs of their communities and students. The approach of taking things slow and allowing flexibility to meet individual community needs is one that should be considered for national ELT initiatives.

Years of experience with afterschool, as well as the existing models of ELT, suggest that we need a range of options for communities to choose from in deciding how to expand learning opportunities for children and youth. See the chart on page 7 for a vision of the key elements of both more traditional approaches to expanding learning, such as afterschool, as well as for a well designed expanded learning time initiative.

NEXT STEPS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: CHARTING A COURSE TO EXPAND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Expanded learning opportunities have an important role to play in education reform. There is room for afterschool, before-school and summer programs, and new models where schools expand their hours to integrate enrichment opportunities into students' regular school days. We need to embrace and fund a range of expanded learning opportunity approaches that are designed to best meet the needs of students, families, and communities.

Specific Federal Policy Recommendations:

- Increase funding for 21st CCLC to promote innovative before-school, afterschool and summer programs that connect schools and community based partners to improve student outcomes.
- Ensure that kids in all states can benefit from 21st CCLC by continuing formula grants to states and then competitive grants to local communities. Promote reform by requiring states to submit applications specifically for 21st CCLC funds and allow US Department of Education staff to work closely with states to ensure state applications are of the highest quality and designed to support quality afterschool, before-school and summer programs that are well aligned with the school day.
- Promote additional funding for all expanded learning opportunity approaches (Afterschool and ELT) through Title I, especially Supplemental Education Services, and other sources.
- Ensure that any ELT initiative does more than extend learning time by requiring community partners and real world learning experiences. See the chart on page 7 for a vision of a quality ELT initiative.

In communities today, 15.1 million children take care of themselves after the school day ends. The hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex. The afterschool hours can be a time for trouble or a time for kids to learn new skills, develop relationships with caring adults and prepare for the future. Federal funding sources such as 21st CCLC are essential to help states and local communities establish support systems that make afterschool programs and the extra learning time they provide an expectation, not an afterthought. Particularly in these difficult economic times for working families, and with millions of kids unsupervised and at risk each day, we need to increase the funding for expanded learning opportunities, not pit one approach against each other.

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**A Vision for Expanding Learning Opportunities
Support Multiple Approaches to Meet Communities' Needs**

Model	Method	Key Elements	Results
<p align="center">Proven, Effective Afterschool and Summer Learning</p>	<p>Community partners, universities, museums, faith based partners and other local stakeholders and schools work together to provide enrichment-focused programs in the out- of-school hours, occurring after school, before school or in the summer. These enrichment activities are aligned with and supplement the school day learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands-on learning • Leveraging Community Partners • Funding is shared by schools and partners • Programs are aligned with school day lessons, but learning environment is less formal, more interactive and more creative and features variety of different teaching methods and 'teachers' • Attendance is voluntary, but regular attendance is encouraged • Opportunity for innovation and individualized education. • Relationships with mentors and role models from the community • Access to internships, apprenticeships and jobs • Opportunities for students to engage in community service projects • Tutoring and homework help • Nutritious snack or supper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less disciplinary action; • Lower dropout rates; • Better academic performance in school, including better grades and test scores; • Greater on-time promotion; • Improved homework completion; and • Improved work habits
<p align="center">Expanded Learning Time (recommendations for a model that integrates community partners into the school day to help students succeed)</p>	<p>Enrichment activities are embedded in the regular school day, which now includes more hours to allow for more learning time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands-on learning • Leveraging Community Partners • Funding is shared by schools and partners • 30% more learning time which includes both increased academic time and enrichment activities that allow children to learn a greater array of subjects in a less formal environment • May still need afterschool and summer programs to meet children and families' needs • Mandatory for all students in current models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples from charter schools show promise, but models in non-charter schools are in early stages and evaluations to date show mixed results. • Would be best to build off successful research results found in afterschool and summer models.

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