



# Teacher Voices for Education Reform: **Making the Most of Time in School**

A COLLABORATIVE REPORT FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE VIVA NEA  
TIME IN SCHOOL IDEA EXCHANGE

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**Abstract & Summation:** Teachers from seven states spent hundreds of hours exchanging ideas about time in school. Then, a small group of the participants distilled those ideas into a variety of recommendations focused on making better use of time in school, structuring the school day and year, and implementing the proposed changes.

**Partner:** National Education Association



## THE VIVA NEA TIME IN SCHOOL IDEA EXCHANGE

# Introduction



The VIVA (Voices, Ideas, Vision, Action) NEA Time in School Idea Exchange invited teachers from seven states to share their ideas about structuring time in school. This VIVA Idea Exchange™ occurred because of growing concern about how to improve schools, bolster student achievement and provide effective alternatives to the current school calendar.

The online VIVA Idea Exchange™, which combines technology and collaboration to amplify the voices of key stakeholders in critical policy matters, is a program of New Voice Strategies. Facilitated by a moderator, the conversation is open to peers seeking a safe, productive and easily accessible avenue for joint problem solving and action.

The VIVA NEA Time in School Idea Exchange occurred from November 6, 2013–January 27, 2014.

### The VIVA NEA Time in School Idea Exchange was conducted in three phases:

During **Phase I**, which occurred from November 6, 2013–December 4, 2013, NEA members from across the country were invited to share their ideas in answer to this question:

*If you could redesign the school structure to best fit the needs of your students at this moment of rapid change, what would the school day, week and year look like?*

In response, 348 members added 145 ideas and shared 348 comments with one another.

During **Phase II**, from December 5, 2013–December 20, 2013, six educators worked together as the VIVA NEA Time in School Writing Collaborative. These individuals were selected because of their active participation in Phase I, in terms of both quantity and quality. Their assignment was to take the ideas presented during the online forum and summarize and synthesize them into discrete, workable recommendations about how to better use time in school.

**Phase III** of the process will begin on January 27, 2014, when the members of the Writing Collaborative present their ideas to the National Education Association.

New Voice Strategies believes in the inspiration that grows from pragmatic experience, and in the power of individual voices to make big change. The VIVA Idea Exchange™ is one example of that power in action. We are inspired by the teachers and grateful for their positive contribution to the strength of our schools and America's democratic process. Many thanks to these VIVA NEA Time in School teachers: **Josh Agpalza, Josh Brown, Anissa Emery, Andrea Leggett, Joseph Medeiros** and **Steve Owens**. (Their profiles can be found at the end of this report.) The innumerable hours these individuals spent grappling with big ideas and small details made this work possible.

We also wish to thank the **National Education Association**, our partner in this endeavor.





## THE VIVA NEA TIME IN SCHOOL IDEA EXCHANGE

### Overview

**It is an alluring premise:** “What if by considering the issue of time in school and reimagining the school day, we could better meet the educational needs of students?” The general public discourse on this issue has raised many questions about how we approach the school day and year and the specific changes that could improve our schools. This report provides concrete solutions to answer those questions. However, as with any educational policy issue, before we implement any miracle policy changes, we must utilize the experience of classroom experts to understand how those changes will impact the day-to-day life of our students and the realities of their classrooms. To take the issue to its logical conclusion, we could develop a brilliant strategy for maximizing time in school, but without considering the real needs of individual students and specifically how the changes will be implemented, the extra time could actually hinder or hurt students and their education. For teachers and our students, time in school is not just an abstract theory about our education system; it is inextricably tied to those daily realities of the classroom.

Teachers prepared this report based on the suggestions and comments posted on the VIVA NEA Time in School Idea Exchange. The voices of teachers inform every aspect of this report, and our voices and pens crafted the words you now read.

**We have divided recommendations for this report into three sections:** First, we demonstrate specific instructional strategies that foster increased student engagement and amplify the impact of school time. Second, we provide solutions to improve the structure of the school day and year. Finally, we propose strategies to support effective implementation of the changes. In our recommendations and proposed solutions, then, you will see a vision of time in school that improves the utilization of time, better structures time and lays a path of actions toward those improvements.

Finally, we want to emphasize the joy we found in these policy discussions. We did not merely focus on the central issue of time in school. As often happens when educators come together, we shared our concerns and hopes about student learning and our own role as teachers in improving our schools. We shared our passion for teaching. This report reflects our collaborative efforts to address and shape how schools can make the most of the time students have in school, but it also reflects the love that educators have for our students, schools and our willingness to lead in every area of policy necessary for our students’ and society’s future.

We do not merely suggest that our voices be heard in these discussions, we emphasize that in order to be successful, any discussion of changes to the educational system must be led by educators and the communities we serve.



## Index of Actionable Ideas

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### RECOMMENDATION 1

**Develop educational program recommendations that integrate with a revised school calendar to promote increased teacher collaboration.**

#### Proposed Solutions

1. Develop a menu of strategies to facilitate teacher collegiality and cooperation.
  2. Develop and distribute a comprehensive description of what it means to be a professional educator.
  3. Support evidence-based instructional practice recommendations that incorporate student collaboration.
  4. Provide teachers with increased common planning time for collaboration.
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### RECOMMENDATION 2

**Group students by ability, not by age, to create an academic environment in which they are more likely to succeed.**

#### Proposed Solutions

5. Allow children to show they have mastered standards and move on to more difficult and/or complex concepts as they are ready.
  6. Encourage and support schools to create partnerships between nearby schools of other levels (elementary, middle, high and college).
  7. Assess students individually in each content area.
  8. Enhance integration of technology into instruction.
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### RECOMMENDATION 3

**Lengthen the school day and the school year.**

#### Proposed Solutions

9. Cap class size at 25 students to allow for more individualized instruction for all students.
10. Implement a block schedule for extended school days in secondary education.
11. Extend the school year from 180 days to 210 days.
12. Compensate staff for increased number of work days and hours.
13. Extend the 6 ½ hour school day for elementary and secondary schools by up to 90 minutes.
14. Allocate a block of remedial tutoring time for students in need of extra help and enrichment activities for those who are doing well.
15. Revise promotion policies so that students must pass four out of four core subjects, providing opportunity to make up unsuccessful coursework.

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**RECOMMENDATION 4**

**Restructure the school day so that activities and instructional time take place when it is developmentally appropriate for elementary, middle and high schools.**

**Proposed Solutions**

16. Align start times to be research-based and age appropriate to support students' biological and academic needs.
  17. Move traditional after-school activities to before school.
  18. Give local school districts the autonomy to set school and activity hours.
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**RECOMMENDATION 5**

**Enable local school districts to provide equitable and ample resources and make better use of existing resources to address their diverse needs.**

**Proposed Solutions**

19. Explore revenue neutral options schools have to support increased time in school.
  20. Explore various options that would require increased revenue to extend time in school.
  21. Pursue alternative revenue options to support extended time in school.
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**RECOMMENDATION 6**

**Revise federal policies to better support a balance of strong local control policies with civil rights and equity for all students.**

**Proposed Solutions**

22. Give teachers, families and districts that are directly affected by funding changes related to time in school a specific and potentially strong voice on committees or decision-making bodies.
  23. In cases where civil rights and lack of equity for all students are issues, develop federal policies to support remedies.
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**RECOMMENDATION 7**

**Conduct a campaign to promote awareness of the importance of reforming the school calendar.**

**Proposed Solutions**

24. Create a national media campaign to educate the public on the need to reform our school calendar.
  25. At the local school level, involve the PTA or a core group of parents to disseminate information and influence parental and community support.
  26. Empower a core group of student leaders to integrate student voice.
  27. Place teachers and our unions in the driver's seat of this initiative.
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# Recommendations For Making Better Use of The Time We Have In School



## RECOMMENDATION 1

### **Develop educational program recommendations that integrate with a revised school calendar to promote increased teacher collaboration.**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Currently in most schools, there is little time in the school day for teacher collaboration. Increases in class loads, student numbers, demands of new technologies, graduation requirements, emphasis on core curriculum, and district cost-cutting measures have squeezed school schedules and staffing ratios down to the wire, with little “extra” to spare. The benefits of collaboration on teacher morale, student achievement, and school improvement have been documented in numerous studies, and therefore that collaboration is vital to an educator’s day.

#### **Proposed Solutions**

1. **Develop a menu of program recommendations to facilitate teacher collegiality and cooperation through team teaching, professional learning communities and other activities.**
2. **Support teams of classroom educators to develop and distribute a comprehensive description of what it means to be a professional educator, including recommendations for standards for becoming a reflective practitioner of our craft.** This description should be clear, but flexible, so as to accommodate the diversity and experience of the members of the education profession.
3. **Support evidence-based instructional practice recommendations that incorporate student collaboration** (including inquiry teams, etc.).
4. **Provide teachers with increased common planning time for collaboration.** Research suggests that when teachers are given adequate time to create and refine their pedagogy, it has a direct “impact on teachers’ competence and, in turn, on students’ proficiency.”

#### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Students**

Increased collaboration allows educators to exchange ideas and educate each other to increase student engagement. This benefits classroom processes and content, strengthens students’ social skills and character education, appreciation for diversity among their peers, as well as effective modeling of problem-solving and negotiation skills. These improvements are specifically aligned with interpersonal “soft skills” that are important for career-readiness and future success. It will particularly help high-need students who often do not perform well in a traditional educational setting without additional supports.





## Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

Study findings suggest school leaders have the power to enhance math test scores and reduce gaps in scores across groups of students by encouraging teaching environments where community and professional teamwork are valued and rewarded.

Beyond simple test scores, research also demonstrates a positive correlation between schools that develop and support collaboration as a part of their programming and increases in student achievement, staff morale, positive school climate, and improved school-community partnerships.

The benefits of collaboration among teachers are already integrated in many districts through the practice of veteran teachers mentoring new teachers. The U.S. Department of Education has also identified teacher collaboration as a technique for “improving instruction in 35 chronically low-performing schools that achieved dramatic turnarounds.”

Experienced teachers often recall team or collaborative teaching experiences as their best and worst experiences in a classroom. Like any form of collaborative scholarship, successful collaborative teaching integrates the strengths of multiple viewpoints in a synthesized endeavor that no single member of the project could have completed independently.



## RECOMMENDATION 2

### **Group students by ability, not by age, to create an academic environment in which they are more likely to succeed.**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Grouping students by age allows neither teachers to maximize their effectiveness nor students to capitalize on their strengths. The issue of how, and whether, to group students by ability came up frequently in the Idea Exchange. For example, one participant said: “If I could redesign the school structure I would change this one-size fits all approach. To say that all students at a certain age or grade level should be in the same place is ludicrous. Classrooms should be more developmental. I understand that we don’t want to label students, but it is an immeasurable task to put a teacher in a class of 30 individuals and expect the teacher to meet every need. When students are grouped by developmental levels, teachers can better plan to meet their needs.”

#### **Proposed Solutions**

5. **Allow children to show they have mastered standards and move on to more difficult and/or complex concepts as they are ready.** The term “standards” is a bit of a misnomer as it can often imply a uniform set of expectations for students. Instead, standards should be treated as checkpoints for students to master at a rate that is best for their individual learning.
6. **Encourage and support schools to create partnerships between nearby schools of other levels (elementary, middle, high and college).** In order to sufficiently meet the academic needs of all students, schools should offer classes of varying levels in all content areas. This may not be possible in individual school buildings, so it may be necessary to create partnerships to allow students simple and easy transportation between multiple buildings. This would allow for a sixth grader who is ahead of grade level in math to take high school level courses at a nearby location without too much interruption. In cases where this is impossible, technological solutions could allow students to receive higher-level coursework within their own school building.
7. **Assess students individually in each content area.** Students who are showing a low reading skill should not be automatically placed in all classes for students who need additional help. Making the assumption that a student who does not excel in one subject area will not excel in another is a mistake. Determining when a student is ready to move forward in a content area should be based on whether the student shows mastery of standards. This allows students to move at their own pace, and have flexibility in the amount of time spent on concepts within the subject area. This is especially relevant to time in school when it comes to assessment. Currently, a large percentage of students’ time is wasted on multiple assessments at levels that are not appropriate for their ages or ability levels.
8. **Enhance integration of technology into instruction.** Today’s students relate well to this strategy and are more apt to pay attention and participate. The extended day and year allows for more flexibility to allot time where it is needed most.







## **Why We Believe This Will Work for Students**

We are seeing too many students whose academic needs are not being met. Some are being pushed through grade levels year after year without actually mastering the standards. Other students are being held back from reaching their full potential because they are ahead of their grade level. These students often become behavior problems during class due to boredom and lack of challenges, or they become under-achievers who make a habit of doing the minimum to get by and then struggle later on in life when they are truly challenged.

Grouping students based on their ability in each content area allows every student to receive instruction aimed directly at them, not at a classroom full of those of a similar age who may or may not have a similar understanding of content. Expanding the amount of time schools have to address this issue will create opportunities to meet the needs of students.

Unless instruction is differentiated by ability, the amount or structure of time in school will have negligible impact on many students' learning. The issue is not the amount of instruction they are receiving, but that it is difficult for them to engage in learning when the environment does not differentiate for their educational needs.

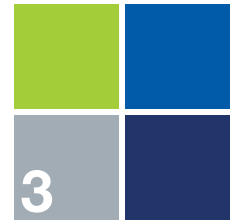
## **Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers**

Teachers are expected to differentiate instruction more and more during every class. This requires teachers to spend more time planning for every class and grading multiple assignments from these classes. Grouping students together by ability would allow teachers to plan and teach students more effectively, as instruction would be intentionally and appropriately geared to student readiness.

## **Why We Believe This Will Work for Parents**

Grouping students by ability would allow parents to have a better understanding of what their individual child is working on specifically in each class. Parents could be made more aware of what content their child is mastering and where their child is struggling. Parents will be able to prioritize homework and additional tutoring or remediation as they follow the child's progress.





## RECOMMENDATION 3

### Lengthen the school day and school year.

#### Statement of the Problem

Our students are not reaching their full potential either on standardized tests or in other areas. Many college freshmen need refresher classes just to prepare them for regular courses. While some of this data can be explained by opportunity gaps created by inequities among the students, we need to support all students to succeed. Without proper interventions and enough instructional time, problems at one grade level can create a chain reaction of learning gaps that will affect mastery of material in later grades.

#### Proposed Solutions

9. **Cap class size at 25 students to allow for more individualized instruction for all students.**
10. **Implement a block schedule for extended school days in secondary education.** Block schedules not only will provide more time for student learning, but also benefit the pedagogy of teachers. These benefits include opportunities to cover more material and examine topics in greater depth, connect concepts that occur in different classes, and devote more time to discuss and reflect on lessons.
11. **Extend the school year from 180 days to 210 days.**
12. **Compensate staff for the increased number of work days and hours.**
13. **Extend the 6 ½ hour school day for elementary and secondary schools by up to 90 minutes to ensure adequate time for student learning.** Increase weekly time spent on core subjects by 60 to 75 minutes. A study by Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning suggests that elementary students need more than 1,000 hours of classroom time in order to meet/exceed learning standards, especially for the four core subjects of mathematics, science, language arts and social studies. This is also true for secondary students.
14. **Allocate a block of remedial tutoring time for students in need of extra help and enrichment activities for those who are doing well.** This is already being done in some schools toward the end of the school day. All students should be provided the opportunity to receive additional help before or after school.
15. **Revise promotion policies so that students must pass four out of four core subjects, providing opportunity to make up unsuccessful coursework.**



## Calendar Comparisons

The charts below were created by the National Association for Year-Round Education to show the distribution of days in the traditional nine-month calendar compared to the distribution of school days in a balanced or modified calendar. The charts are based on a year of 258 (Monday through Friday) work days, do not include weekends, and represent a standard school year of 180 days.

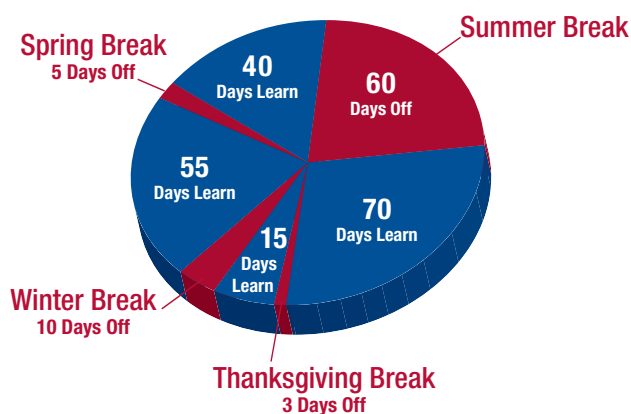
The **traditional calendar** features a long (12-week) summer vacation followed by a long (70 day) period of in-session days, with the first break at Thanksgiving. The winter holidays are followed by 55 in-session days before a short spring break, which is followed by 40 work days to end the school year.

The **balanced calendar** reduces the long summer break and apportions those days throughout the school year, producing more frequent breaks, fewer long periods of in-session days, and longer vacations.

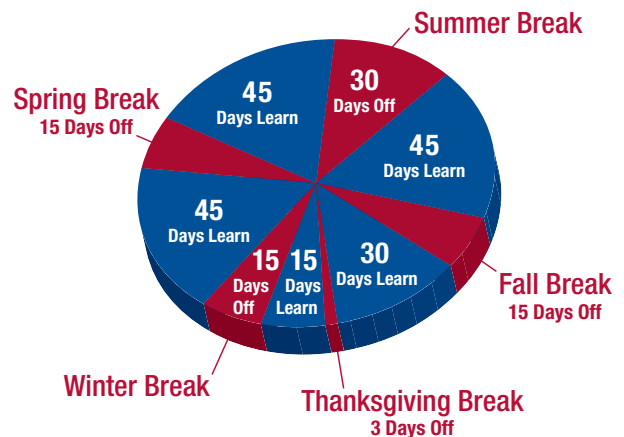
Both calendars feature 180 days of instruction, with the modified calendar balancing the frequency of in-session days with days on break. The winter holiday and Thanksgiving break can be the same on both calendars.

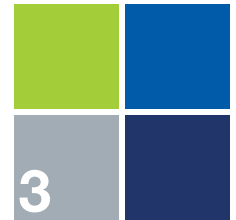
*Source: National Association for Year-Round Education*

### Traditional Calendar



### Balanced Calendar





### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Students**

There is evidence from other countries and domestic systems that increased time in school improves student achievement on tests. In some nations, where summer vacations are shorter, students do not experience the same learning gaps that our students experience across socio-economic differences. Extending the school year will have the dual effect of lessening the learning loss that happens over summer break, and save time by requiring less re-teaching when school resumes. Moreover, in some schools, where students lack a stable family support system, extra time in school can help them feel that sense of family that they do not have at home.

### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers**

Extending the school day and year will provide teachers with more time to teach core subjects like mathematics and science, which will enable students to truly master the material instead of just being “exposed” to it. Teachers will reap an additional benefit of having more students do well on standardized testing. With positive results, unfair negative criticism aimed at teachers and our education system will greatly decrease.

Teachers participating in extended time (including Massachusetts’s Extended Learning Time initiative) have more time to answer students’ questions, discuss students’ reflections, cover more material, and implement differentiation strategies to meet the needs of all learners. In addition, some after-school planning and professional development time could be moved to before the school day in order to maintain a similar start/end contract time. Doing so would allow teachers to limit their own additional childcare costs and reduce the possibility of teachers needing a second evening job.





## RECOMMENDATION 4

### **Restructure the school day so that activities and instructional time take place when it is developmentally appropriate for elementary, middle and high school students.**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Recent reforms in education have set higher expectations for student achievement. While some studies suggest that the time allotted is insufficient for students to meet and exceed these expectations, other research shows that starting school at a different time can benefit students. The school schedule needs to reflect these findings. As one Idea Exchange participant stated: “On the high school level, it is imperative that students begin their day later. Teens between the ages of 14-18 are experiencing rapid brain development, and their ability to participate in meaningful discussion, critically analyze, and share intellectual thoughts is hindered at 7:30 a.m.”

#### **Proposed Solutions**

16. **Align start times to be research-based and age appropriate to support students’ biological and academic needs.** Secondary schools should start later. Research shows that the older students need additional sleep and students who depart for school earlier in the morning than their peers do not perform as well comparatively.
17. **Move traditional after-school activities such as clubs and team sports to before school.** When moving start times, we must take into consideration some of the activities that our students traditionally participate in after school hours. Some of these activities could become before-school activities as a way to balance the needs of students. School districts would need to provide appropriate transportation for before and after school activities so that no student would be disenfranchised.
18. **Give local school districts the autonomy to set school and activity hours.** State and national departments of education should provide resources and recommendations when necessary.





### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Students**

The current school day structures fail to account for the basic concepts of human psychological and biological development. Providing a school day that fits the needs of students' growth and development will not only directly increase their ability to concentrate and retain what they study, but students will also feel greater ownership of their education.

Establishing developmentally appropriate start times could also reduce the number of disciplinary measures necessary to address tardiness, inattentiveness and truancy during first period classes. This would help to close opportunity gaps between students with access to better transportation options and stable home lives and those who have greater obstacles to attending school.

### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers**

Every educator has had the experience teaching a first period class in which a large number of the students are absent or barely awake. We use our expertise to overcome this dynamic to reach as many students as possible. However, we could reach more students more effectively if we didn't have to fight the basic principles of biology each morning.





## RECOMMENDATION 5

### **Enable local school districts to provide equitable and ample resources and make better use of existing resources to address their diverse needs.**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Per pupil public school spending varies widely in the United States, from approximately \$7,000 to \$18,000, depending on the state (with an average of \$11,810, according to a 2013 estimate by the National Center on Education Statistics). Some districts spend as much as \$25,000 per pupil. Changes in the way time is spent in school will depend on the level of existing funding. It has been estimated that extending the school year for public school children would cost anywhere from \$900-\$1,500 per pupil. This would cover the increased salaries of educators, wages of other school staff, and additional utility and maintenance expenses. Therefore, high spending districts would have more revenue neutral options.

In tough economic times (and even prosperous times) schools explore a variety of options to pay for staff, programs, facilities and other needs. The options below suggest a range of possibilities that can be considered for a school's development plan as it maps out ways to support increased time in school. While it is tempting to focus merely on the revenue neutral solutions, they will only bring subtle improvement. To truly bring equity to all students, we need to address the wide disparities in funding between districts and schools.

#### **Proposed Solutions**

##### **19. Explore revenue neutral options schools have to support increased time in school.**

These options include:

- Scheduling built around professional collaboration and professional development rather than planning time.
- Flexible staffing, including staggered teacher start and end times.
- Co-teaching (requires co-planning time).
- Job sharing.
- Shifting professional development money from graduate courses to job-embedded professional development, including mentoring and observation (which would require adjustment of salary schedules).





**20. Explore various options that would require increased revenue to extend time in school.** These options can include:

- Increasing the number of teachers to keep class size steady.
- Pay professional teachers to be substitutes (so regular teachers do not have to substitute on top of leadership work).
- Account for necessary planning time for a longer school day/year.
- Provide stipends for leadership work.
- Using Peer Assistance and Review Systems (PARS).
- Allowing release time for policy/political/union work (in low spending districts).

**21. Pursue alternative revenue options to support extended time in school.**

These include:

- Conducting fundraisers and seeking donations via the Internet in the same way that national charities raise money for cancer research.
- Partnering with businesses that would help sponsor a school or district.

### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Students**

Student needs go far beyond academics and standardized core instruction and materials. For every student who needs a little more time in the current system to succeed, there are many more students who are not entirely engaged for the time they are already in school. In the last decade, most districts have seen their educational funding cut at the local, state and national levels. Often this leads to a narrowing of learning opportunities and choices for students. More resources for students would enable school districts to meet that diverse array of student needs and engage every student.

A healthy school provides a wide range of electives, a full staff of food service, medical and social work professionals, and opportunities for parents to engage and learn at the school as well. Additional resources would also provide schools with an opportunity to help students who might otherwise be overlooked. Our goal must be to engage every student, not merely give them the option to fit into a uniform role. No one solution will work for all students, but with ample resources, we can make sure the right fit is available for each student.

### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers**

The teaching population has traditionally been disproportionately female. As a result, historically, teachers have received one of the lowest average salaries among all professional occupations. By devoting more resources to compensating educators, we make teaching a more desirable profession.

Added resources would also allow districts to have more flexibility when setting teacher schedules (for example, teachers with young children might have opportunities to work a different schedule than teachers whose children play after-school sports). In addition, we believe that improving our schools with the help of new resources would help address a challenge faced by teachers: the negative public perception of our profession.







## RECOMMENDATION 6

### **Revise federal policies to better support a balance of strong local control policies with civil rights and equity for all students.**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

On key education issues, including time in school, local stakeholders often do not have adequate input on matters that affect students and help determine the quality of education.

#### **Proposed Solutions**

22. **Give teachers, families and districts that are directly affected by funding changes related to time in school a specific and potentially strong voice on committees or decision-making bodies.**
23. **In cases where civil rights and lack of equity for all students are issues, develop federal policies to support remedies.** For example, federal policies that support local control must have the authority to address situations where key stakeholders (including teachers) are not represented.

#### **Why We Believe This Will Work**

This strategy will help ensure that all students have opportunities to receive a quality education. Expanding time in school also fits this strategy, since schools and districts may develop a wide range of plans about how to shape the school calendar and meet their needs.





## RECOMMENDATION 7

### **Conduct a campaign to promote awareness of the importance of reforming the school calendar.**

#### **Statement of the problem**

Americans must be made aware of the magnitude of challenges facing our educational system—and how to address them by reforming our antiquated agrarian school calendar. On the local level, parents, teachers, students, and community members must be willing partners in the process or it may be impossible to reach a solution.

#### **Proposed Solutions**

24. **Create a national media campaign to educate the public about the need to reform our school calendar.**
25. **At the local school level, involve the PTA or a core group of parents to disseminate information and influence parental and community support.**
26. **Empower a core group of student leaders to integrate student voice.**
27. **Place teachers and our unions in the driver's seat of this initiative (and other educational policy initiatives).** If they take partial ownership in the process to solve the problem, then they will be more committed to solving it.

#### **Why We Believe This Will Work**

Education is a national issue that affects every single person in every community in our society. A national public awareness campaign that involves schools, teachers, parents and students on a local level will have the national scope to inspire everyone to consider the best strategies for the use of time in school, but also allow every community to offer its own unique perspective. Through the campaign, we will move beyond discussions of merely extending the school day and year to help people see the urgency of getting the most out of our schools

#### **Why We Believe This Will Work for Students**

Making the American public aware of the need to revise the school calendar and support related efforts are critical steps toward persuading policymakers to fund it. When funding is increased, students will have more time to learn and a school environment that better meets their needs. A positive campaign can focus on how to prepare students to thrive in a global society—a goal that can be tied to innovative time in school policies.





## **Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers**

A persuasive public awareness campaign would create opportunities to debunk myths about schools. It could also create more support for classroom teachers by informing the public about what teachers do with the time we already have (and this would help dispel the notion that “Teachers only work a few hours a day for 9 months a year.”). A campaign that communicates key points about the teaching profession that the public seldom sees will not only help the public engage on the issue of time in school, but create a deeper understanding of our education system and our profession in general.

## **Why We Believe This Will Work for Parents**

A successful public awareness campaign can allow parents to play a crucial role in addressing the idea of changing the school model. By informing them about needed changes, they can fully participate in the discussion of what changes would be best for their children.



## THE VIVA NEA TIME IN SCHOOL IDEA EXCHANGE

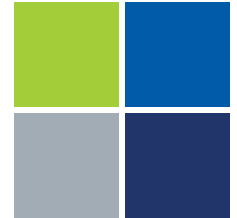
### Conclusion

Re-envisioning the way time is spent in schools is a critical discussion. As our culture changes, education as an institution must continue to reinvent itself in order to be responsive to student needs and reflective of our knowledge of best practices. For many of our students, their experience of the world is, in some ways, one that is flexible and extensively customizable, especially as it pertains to information or content and the ways in which students can access the material. Being mindful of this fundamental difference will help drive our decision making and planning toward a more extensive menu of options for schools and students, rather than an increasingly limited and standardized delivery system.

At the heart of any successful change process is an opportunity and a willingness to collaborate. In order for teachers to be reflective practitioners of their craft, they must have time to collaborate, develop collegial relationships that surpass everyday congeniality, and become the source of empowerment and professional development in the field.

In today's schools, all options and voices should be brought into the discussion of how time is spent. Together we must reassess the status quo, from the length of the school day to the number of days in the year, and all other permutations of the calendar that might be applicable to individual schools and districts. And then, most importantly, when it is time to make a final decision for the community, we must come together and forge a vision of education that redefines the school calendar in ways that benefit students and schools.





## Endnotes

### Year-Round School

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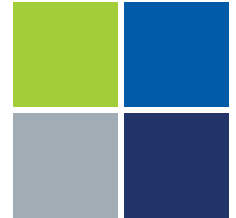
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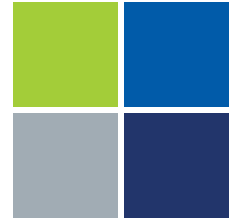
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## THE VIVA NEA TIME IN SCHOOL IDEA EXCHANGE

### The VIVA NEA Time in School Writing Collaborative

Bios



**JOSHUA AGPALZA** is a Cambridge World History and AVID teacher at Federal Way High School (FWHS) in Federal Way, Wash. His commitment to inspire students to achieve greatness is deeply rooted in the fact that he is the first in his family to graduate from college. At the end of his first year at FWHS, Josh was awarded the district's Teacher's Award, and was a member of its Equity and Diversity Committee. Currently, he is a member of the Positive Behavior and Intervention Committee, head tennis coach for boys and girls, and the adviser for the Break Dancing Crew. Josh is furthering his professional development as a National Boards Candidate for 2013-14.



**JOSHUA BROWN** teaches sixth grade students at Goodrell Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa. He is the father of a second grader and husband of a high school science teacher. He has been an active advocate for children and the education profession his entire career, in a variety of roles within his district and education association.



**ANISSA EMERY** is a teacher and counselor at Oscoda High School in northeast Michigan. From her early work as a bookseller, to her classroom teaching experience working with at-risk and alternative education students, to her current role, one common theme has emerged: the power of people's stories. Anissa has helped students get their work published in nationally known compilations and anthologies including *High School is Not Forever* by Jane Bluestein, as well as numerous local and regional outlets. Her own work has appeared in print in Bluestein's *The Win-Win Classroom*, *Info Northeast*, *Between the Lines*, and *Kwasind/Qua*, the University of Michigan-Flint literary magazine. A passionate progressive thinker, Anissa actively seeks out new opportunities to make a difference in local, regional and national policy discussions and development.



## THE VIVA NEA TIME IN SCHOOL IDEA EXCHANGE

### The VIVA NEA Time in School Writing Collaborative

Bios



**ANDREA LEGGETT**, a dance teacher in Colorado, attended Lindenwood University in Missouri, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Arts Management with a Dance Emphasis and a Master of Arts in Teaching. After teaching dance at studios in and around the St. Louis, Mo., area for many years, Andrea began her public education career in 2011 in Greeley, Colo. She created a dance program for all fifth grade students and any middle school students who showed an interest, and a before-school program for students in kindergarten and first grade that focused on improving literacy through movement. In 2013, she moved to create a new program at Martin Luther King Jr. Early College in Denver for students in grades six to 12. She is currently a Teach Plus/NEA Future of the Profession Fellow. Her goal is to make dance a part of every student's education regardless of location or socio-economic status.



**JOSEPH A. MEDEIROS** is a retired educator with a Master's Degree in Bilingual Bicultural Education. He has 24 years of classroom experience teaching fifth and sixth grade. He retired after serving 14 additional years as an assistant principal in New Bedford, Mass. He also taught more than 20 years for the state's Massachusetts Migrant Education Program (MMEP) during summer vacations, working with children in many grade levels and from various parts of the world. His life has been dedicated to helping inner city children and English learners obtain a quality education. He loves teaching and believes that once a teacher, always a teacher. During tax season, he works as a tax preparer. His free time is spent researching Christology and studying ancient and world history including military history.



**STEVE OWENS** is a National Board Certified music teacher who teaches preschool to sixth grade general music, strings, band and chorus in Calais and Sharon, Vt., two districts that are 50 miles apart. He holds a second endorsement in technology integration, a level 3 certification in Orff-Schulwerk (an approach to general music teaching), and has attended the Orff Insitut in Salzburg, Austria. He has taught graduate professional development courses in music education. A union activist, Steve is president of his Vermont-NEA local affiliate, secretary/treasurer of his state affiliate, and an active member of the Teacher Union Reform Network. In 2010, he was a Teaching Ambassador Fellow with the U.S. Dept. of Education, during which time he developed expertise in labor-management collaboration.

# New Voice Strategies

Action

**New Voice Strategies** is a nonprofit corporation founded by a group of seasoned professionals who believe in an individual's ability to make our world better, fairer and more productive. New Voice Strategies created the VIVA Idea Exchange™ to offer leaders a new way to communicate with their stakeholders. The VIVA Idea Exchange™ is an online peer collaboration platform that plumbs the wisdom of committed people with front-line experience to create consensus on a variety of actionable recommendations. We believe in the power of authentic experience and provide committed people with an avenue to make a difference.

Our passion is to make their voices heard. Since 2010, New Voice Strategies has engaged more than 5,500 committed classroom teachers in peer-to-peer collaborations. Through them, New Voice Strategies offers unvarnished insights into professional visions and priorities for strengthening America's public schools from coast to coast.

## Board of Directors

**JILL BASS** taught in the Chicago and New York City public schools for 14 years. She has a master's in instructional leadership from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and has been a professional developer, curriculum writer, educational consultant, and instructional coach. She is currently director of the Mikva Challenge's National Center for Action Civics, overseeing curriculum development and teacher training.

**JEAN-CLAUDE BRIZARD** is currently a senior adviser at the College Board, focusing on developing the organization's career readiness initiative. He is the former chief executive of Chicago Public Schools. Prior to his appointment in Chicago, he was superintendent of schools for the Rochester City School District in New York.

**ANNA BURGER** is a long-time strategist who was an advanced leadership fellow at Harvard University and served on President Obama's Economic Recovery Board. She was chair of Change to Win and the first woman to head an American labor federation. In 2010, Burger retired as secretary-treasurer of SEIU, the nation's fastest growing union, where she had served since 2001. Burger was named one of *Washingtonian* magazine's 100 Most Powerful Women in 2006 and 2009.

**TOM COSGROVE** (Ex officio), co-founder of New Voice Strategies, brings strong experience as a message and communications strategist to our work. He has designed and implemented successful communications and grassroots campaigns for more than three decades, as an environmental activist, campaign manager, political media consultant, and adviser to businesses and nonprofits.

**ELIZABETH EVANS** (Ex officio) is the founding CEO of New Voice Strategies. She has more than 25 years of professional experience in community-based organizing and policy advocacy, strategic communications, law, and policy. She is a recognized

national leader for building unconventional alliances and bringing innovative approaches to solving difficult policy problems. For the last 12 years, she has focused on education policy. Previously, she spent 10 years as a courtroom litigator for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

**JOHN HUSSEY** is chief strategy officer at Battelle for Kids. He provides organizational and strategic oversight for the organization's clients in the areas of innovation, technology, communications, development, and strategic planning. Prior to joining Battelle for Kids, John enjoyed a 30-year career in education and technology. He previously served as the regional manager for SchoolNet, Inc., helping create web-based products to help teachers access student data and curricular standards via the Internet for use in instructional planning. He was also a middle school science teacher and technology coordinator in several Ohio school districts.

**KIPLUND "KIP" KOLKMEIER** is of counsel to the Political Law and Government Relations practice groups of Perkins, Coie, LLC & Kolkmeier Consulting. His legal practice focuses on state legislative lobbying in Illinois, corporate and governmental ethics issues, administrative rulemaking and executive agency lobbying, PAC management, state and federal campaign finance issues, and association management. He previously was a partner at the law firms of Sidley & Austin, Altheimer & Gray, and Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon.

**ASHLEY WARLICK** has been a public school teacher for more than 12 years. For eight of those years, she taught elementary school in the Cambridge Public Schools in Massachusetts. She has expertise in teaching students with special needs, and brings a strong interest in the arts to her work. Ashley recently accepted a position teaching abroad at the American Overseas School in Rome.



