



Changing with the Times: Perspectives of Colorado Educators on Improving Time for Learning

A COLLABORATIVE REPORT FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE VIVA COLORADO EXTENDED LEARNING TIME IDEA EXCHANGE

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Abstract & Summation: Members of the Colorado Education Association and educators from throughout Colorado spent hours debating extended learning time. Then, a small group of the participants distilled those ideas into four recommendations for restructuring the school day, restructuring the school year, creating more opportunities for teacher collaboration, and re-evaluating the structure of time for student learning.

Partner: Colorado Education Association and National Center for Time and Learning

THE VIVA COLORADO EXTENDED LEARNING TIME IDEA EXCHANGE



Introduction



The VIVA (Voices, Ideas, Vision, Action) Extended Learning Time Idea Exchange invited educators from throughout Colorado to share their ideas about extended learning time. This VIVA Idea Exchange™ occurred to share their ideas and provide recommendations for extended learning time.

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 professional moderator, the conversation is open to peers seeking a safe, productive and easily accessible avenue for joint problem solving and action.

The VIVA Colorado Extended Learning Time Idea Exchange was conducted from February 10, 2014–April 22, 2014, in three phases:

During **Phase I**, which occurred from February 10, 2014–March 14, 2014, members of the Colorado Education Association and educators from throughout Colorado were invited to share their ideas in answer to these questions:

“Many people have ideas about how time in school should be structured, but only you, the educators who teach Colorado’s students every day, possess the knowledge and experience to envision what will work best for students. Given the opportunity, how would you structure the school day, week and year to serve the needs of all students?”

In response, 128 members added 57 ideas and shared 128 comments with one another.

During **Phase II**, from March 14, 2014–April 7, 2014, four educators worked together as the VIVA Colorado Writing Collaborative. These individuals were selected because of their active participation in Phase 1, 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 for extended learning time.

Phase III of the process will begin on April 22, 2014 when the members of the Writing Collaborative present their ideas to CEA President Kerrie Dallman and other CEA leadership.

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 the VIVA Colorado Extended Learning Time Writing Collaborative teachers: **Greg Grote, Nancy Hahn, Ryan Howard, and Megan Orvis**, whose 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 wish to thank our partners in this endeavor, **National Center for Time and Learning, Colorado Education Association, and the Ford Foundation.**

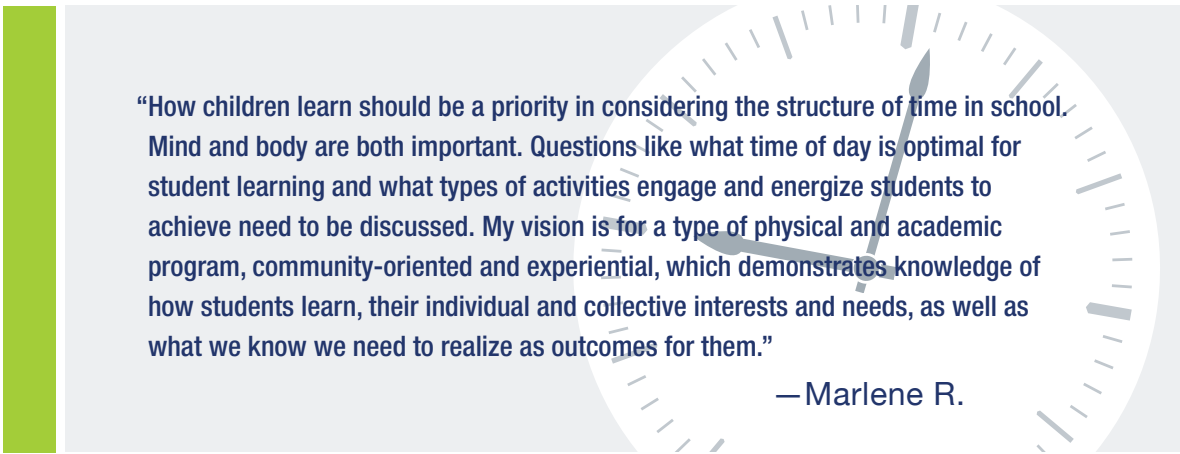
Overview

Extending time for learning is a topic that directly influences the quality of instruction and the professional development of teachers. Educators throughout Colorado are committed to ensuring a high-quality education for their students and opportunities for their own professional development. A report titled *Cost Effective Strategies for Extending Learning Time and Expanding Opportunity in K–12 Education* (2014), from Generation Schools Network states the following:

Unfortunately, many reform efforts simplistically address one or several components without regard for the impact on the whole. For example, a reform that addresses only class size will require more teachers or fewer students. Financial realities make both of those consequences untenable. The traditional model of public schools is built on long-held assumptions and practices related to allocating time, organizing classes, distributing administrative duties, delivering instruction, and measuring achievement. The model was developed for an economy in which roughly half of students could find work that supported their families even if they did not complete high school, let alone obtain post-secondary education (p. 5).

Clearly, circumstances have changed dramatically since the school calendar was developed more than a century ago. Therefore, it is imperative to understand, through the perspectives of educators, how time can best be utilized in schools. Consideration for the needs of students must be at the forefront of advocacy, particularly for students who require additional academic support. Also, teacher development, opportunities for collaboration, consideration of financial implications, structures that support learning, and reducing wasted time must be proactively addressed by initiatives designed to maximize learning time. In addition, we must keep the practical needs of parents in mind as we present recommendations and proposed solutions that can potentially enhance teacher and student development.

While there is disagreement among teachers in terms of supporting a longer school year and/or day, our work demonstrates a solution-oriented approach across grade levels. We are grateful to have our voices heard, as we share ideas generated by teachers committed to improving learning time.



“How children learn should be a priority in considering the structure of time in school. Mind and body are both important. Questions like what time of day is optimal for student learning and what types of activities engage and energize students to achieve need to be discussed. My vision is for a type of physical and academic program, community-oriented and experiential, which demonstrates knowledge of how students learn, their individual and collective interests and needs, as well as what we know we need to realize as outcomes for them.”

—Marlene R.

Index of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

Restructure the school day

Proposed Solutions:

1. Make start times and end times more suited to the sleep/wake cycles of the students.
2. Consider lengthening the school day.
3. Ensure that all-day kindergarten is available for all students.
4. Develop a schedule that avoids disrupting instructional time.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Restructure the school year in a way that considers all the factors that influence a school year and puts the highest consideration on factors that influence teachers' abilities to be effective with their students

Proposed Alternative Solutions:

5. Extend the school year by a specified number of days.
6. Maintain the current school year length, but structure the breaks in a different way.
7. Extend the school year by a specified number of days for our students who struggle.
8. Add days to the existing structure.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Create more opportunities for teachers to collaborate

Proposed Solutions:

9. Audit and monitor the amount of time teachers have to collaborate.
10. Identify schools that create the most opportunities for teachers to collaborate and study their time management systems.
11. Offer professional development for schools and teams to improve their effectiveness as collaborators.
12. Adjust the length of school days to create more collaboration time.
13. Extend school years to create more collaboration days.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Re-evaluate the structure of student learning time

Proposed Solutions:

14. Create dedicated time for student intervention and enrichment.
15. Explore the option of using technology as a tool to achieve student mastery through personalized learning.
16. Create dedicated time for character and community building.

Recommendations for Extending Learning Time in Colorado Public Schools



RECOMMENDATION 1

Restructure the school day

Statement of the Problem

Educators across the United States are discovering that the standard school day is not adequate for all the needs of 21st century students and their teachers. The diversity of our student populations has created a need for additional academic support, emotional and health support, and expansion of enrichment activities, as well as core instruction and “specials.” Teachers not only need time to teach, but to collaborate, build skills, assess, and plan using data. Schools need time for providing healthy breakfasts, administering necessary and required assessments, providing hearing and vision tests, conducting assemblies, convening Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and holding staff and department meetings.

Proposed Solutions

1. Make start times and end times more suited to the sleep/wake cycles of the students.

In many schools and districts, high school students are the earliest to begin school and elementary school students are the last to start their day. Often, high school students start their school day before 7:30 a.m., and end classes before 3 p.m. Elementary students typically begin and end up to an hour later. If this schedule were reversed, with elementary schools starting first, then middle schools, and finally high schools; students would have a more positive temperament and improved academic performance, and make better use of the school day.

“I think that the school day should not start until 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. for secondary schools. Research is clear that students in that age group do not productively learn until around 9:00 a.m., as exemplified by the school day in Finland.”

– Elizabeth T.

“Brain research shows that middle school and high school aged students should start school later than elementary students. Starting elementary students earlier would alleviate the issue of supervision for parents before school starts.”

– Kemberlea A.



2. Consider lengthening the school day.

Additional time in the day could be used for additional instructional time, which can be specifically targeted to student and school needs. Schools may use the time to create schedules according to their needs: to allow for teacher collaboration time, student intervention or enrichment, assemblies, or other time-costly activities.

3. Ensure that all-day kindergarten is available for all students.

All-day kindergarten can provide shared background knowledge, a good foundation, and help create a more level playing field for all children beginning school. This is a beneficial change to the structure of the school day in all elementary or primary schools.

“I feel we need to have all-day kindergarten—absolutely. Since some students start with a much more enriched academic background and others may never really catch up, it is critical that we provide kindergarten at least.”

– Nancy H.

4. Develop a schedule that avoids disrupting instructional time.

Announcements, assemblies, testing, and registration for high school or middle school electives are a few examples of activities that disrupt instructional time. Additionally, educators increasingly use instructional time and formative assessments to collect useful data, but need scheduled time to compare, discuss and plan using that data. Meeting the challenge to develop a schedule that ensures that expected and necessary activities do not interrupt a teacher’s instructional time requires a crucial restructuring of the school day.

“In my district we have so many demands with our curriculum and programs that we actually don’t have enough time in the day to teach it all. When our time in classrooms was compared to the time we need to spend on content, we fell about an hour short. That means I have to teach all the standards in less time than I should have. In addition, my teaching time is spent assessing students over and over, and collecting and analyzing data. Instead, my time should be spent planning engaging units to teach my students to love learning, not assessing them to the point that they no longer like school. Colorado needs to trust its teachers and not constantly request assessments that don’t help drive instruction. The school day needs to be longer and teachers need to be given the time to actually teach.”

– Kelly L.



Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

Adjusting start and end times: As all teachers and parents of teens know, adolescents are bundles of change. The onset of puberty includes many changes including a sleep-wake cycle that causes teens to go to sleep later and wake up later. Schools that have a later start time for high school students have fewer behavior problems and higher academic performance. Studies show that elementary students starting earlier and ending the day earlier have no problems with the schedule. Parents may question the change if they prefer older children home earlier to care for younger siblings, and older students may want to work or engage in athletics. However, the article “School Start Times and the Sleep–Wake Cycle of Adolescents: A Review and Critical Evaluation of Available Evidence,” by Kirby, M. Maggi, S. and D’Angiulli, A (2011), states that with careful planning, school boards were able to delay school start times at a reasonable cost with tolerable disruption of community functioning and with a great payoff. While this adjustment to the school day does not actually add time, it can make the time with students more effective.

Lengthening the school day: Lengthening the school day is a well-researched and often-used solution for having time to teach. A search of *Education Week’s* website for “longer school day” produced a list of nearly 300 articles. The first 15 were about longer days being tried or considered in Florida, New York, Iowa, Maryland, Colorado, Louisiana, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia. Maryland was using the time for enrichment. Florida reported the longer day was “paying off” for 100 of its lowest-scoring elementary schools. Math performance improved in schools in Maryland, Louisiana and New York. “Extending the School Day or School Year: A Systematic Review of Research (1985-2009),” by Patall, E.A., Cooper, H., & Allen, A.B. (2010), concluded that extended school time seemed to be especially useful for students at risk of failing. At-risk and low-achieving students suffer the most summer learning loss, and longer days enable them to make up for it. English-language learners need extra time in most subject areas, as well as additional time to master their new language.

Full-day kindergarten: Ensuring that all children have access to full-day kindergarten is an important method to increase the success of all students’ early elementary school years. Many of us are seeing children of poverty starting school with a real deficit in vocabulary. But this is not the only deficit for many children. Full-day kindergarten can provide children with opportunities not only to learn numbers and colors and how to look at a book, but develop social skills such as taking turns and playing games and fine-motor skills like coloring and cutting. The student without the opportunity to start with these basics may have a rough road compared to his or her peers.

Scheduling to avoid disrupting instructional time: For many teachers, it seems there are just too many interruptions in any school day, which disrupt their lessons and student learning. Many choices are available for scheduling announcements, assemblies, and other activities that break up teaching time. In addition, teachers need time for all of their non-teaching activities, including planning, collaborating across grade levels and subjects, meetings with counselors or intervention specialists, and professional development. One possible method for increasing teaching time is providing teachers with an additional planning period to be used for meetings.



Others include having some enrichment activities or service activities guided by non-teacher community members to free some teacher time, or having regularly scheduled team-building or physical activities that teachers could take turns helping supervise while others meet or plan collaboratively. Good teachers only become excellent teachers if they have the time to build skills and the time to teach.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

Adjusting start and end times: Teachers of middle and high school students understand their students are struggling with school schedules that are in conflict with their sleep/wake cycles. While “brain breaks” and lessons with built-in activity can help, it is not enough. Teachers would be willing to change their schedules to ensure they have alert students. For example, teachers of elementary students would cover core subjects in the morning, when students are alert, instead of having them do that work during the “afternoon slump.”

Lengthening the school day: Teachers already put in a longer day than the hours listed on their schedules. The added time could be used in so many ways to improve the learning experience for students and the teaching experience for teachers. Teachers also would benefit from reduced stress because they would have time earmarked for each responsibility.

Full-day kindergarten for all students: We can no longer make assumptions about the prior knowledge or background of students starting school. Kindergarten is a place to provide all students with a shared experience, social skills, number knowledge... all the basics. This is important for teachers because the stronger the foundation of their students, the more learning they can help students build.

Scheduling to avoid disrupting instructional time: Teachers plan lessons thinking about not only standards and learning objectives, but also time. How long will the focus lesson take? How much time will students need to read this passage? How many weeks will this unit last? How many days should we spend on this skill? Those plans can be completely disrupted by unexpected interruptions for an assembly, two days of testing, or students being pulled out for 15 minutes for yearbook pictures. Teachers would welcome a schedule that allows for confidence in teaching times.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Parents

Adjusting start and end times: A change like this cannot be made without open discussion and collaboration between schools, parents, and the community. Understanding of the reasons behind the change, the science and the value of an adjustment of school times to the community’s children would enable all the stakeholders to feel like a part of the solution.



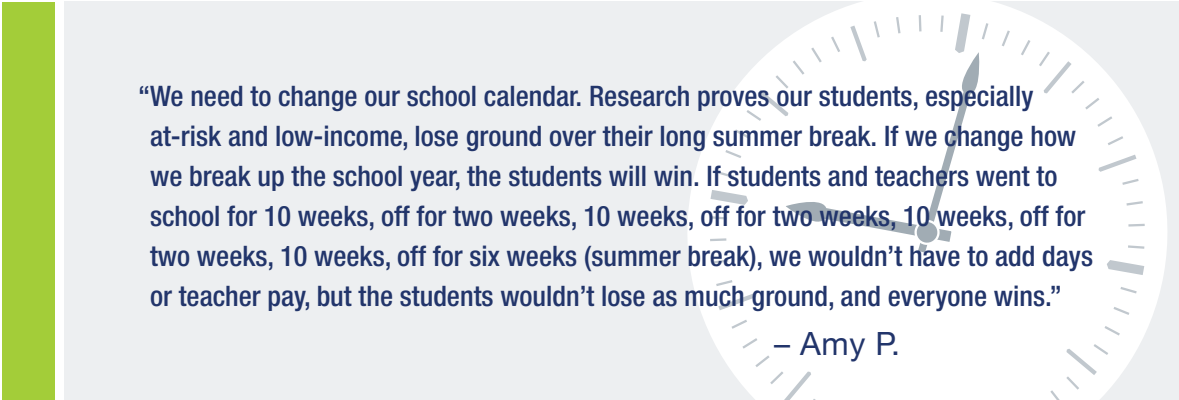
Lengthening the school day: A big change like lengthening the school day should certainly be discussed with all stakeholders. A longer school day can work for parents because it will work for their children. Some parents will benefit by having less need for after-school care. Parents of students who are struggling will find the change helps their children catch up and build confidence. Some parents may see their children enjoying additional enrichment activities. Parents want children to be successful, and a longer day can provide that.

Full-day kindergarten for all students: Parents can reap the benefits of all-day kindergarten through watching their children become confident students who enjoy learning. All parents want to see their children enjoy school and feel successful. This first step into school is crucial for that confidence.

Scheduling to avoid disrupting instructional time: Parents get very frustrated when they realize how many times their children have substitutes because teachers have professional development or math class didn't meet for two days because of scheduled testing. Parents picture their child's day in a classroom learning with a teacher. Creating a schedule that minimizes disruptions of the school day is to everyone's benefit.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Restructure the school year in a way that considers all the factors that influence a school year and puts the highest consideration on factors that influence teachers' abilities to be effective with their students



“We need to change our school calendar. Research proves our students, especially at-risk and low-income, lose ground over their long summer break. If we change how we break up the school year, the students will win. If students and teachers went to school for 10 weeks, off for two weeks, 10 weeks, off for two weeks, 10 weeks, off for two weeks, 10 weeks, off for six weeks (summer break), we wouldn't have to add days or teacher pay, but the students wouldn't lose as much ground, and everyone wins.”

– Amy P.

Statement of the Problem

As many participants in the VIVA Idea Exchange noted, the structure of our school year is not meeting the needs of the students or teachers. Many students regress during the long summer breaks. Many students spend time in front of screens, television or computer, during non-school time and this hurts their achievement.

The demands on teachers have increased. Our education system is expected to provide more individualized and targeted instruction. This individualization and targeting require more time to prepare, analyze data, and adjust instruction. However, the school year has been in the current format for over 150 years; students generally attend school for nine months of the year, often with those nine months organized into quarters, semesters or trimesters, and have various breaks. Most schedules also include a two-and-a-half to three-month summer break. Though this structure has remained static, many other aspects of our education system have changed, including:

- Standards
- Staff and student expectations
- Funding
- Additional knowledge available for students to learn
- New expectations for the post-secondary world, including more international competition for jobs

Proposed Solutions

The following solutions are alternative options for restructuring the school year. Any additional time would require additional resources, including paying staff for additional time.

5. Extend the school year by a specified number of days.

Among the proposed ideas in the Idea Exchange was extending the year to 200 days. If the number of days is increased, it is important to be flexible with the various grade levels. For example, secondary students could handle the increase in time more readily than our youngest students.

“Extended school day and school year would be desired. A 200-day contract for teachers and an eight-hour day for instruction would significantly help our students get caught up. Even consideration of a year-round school district may help us move away from the industrial model of education we currently are struggling with.”

– Pat S.

6. Maintain the current school year length, but structure the breaks in a different way.

For example, have the students in class for nine weeks and then have a three-week break, and continue that pattern throughout the year.

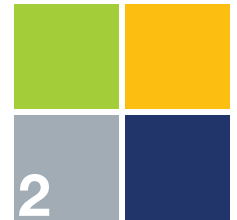
“I also believe that a modified school year should be considered as well. Perhaps similar to a year-round model of tracking on for nine weeks and off for three weeks to allow for more frequent breaks, as well as alleviating burnout for teachers.”

– Kemberlea A.

7. Extend the school year by a specified number of days for our students who struggle.

This idea is complicated by how we determine which students struggle. Often these are students who live in poverty or who speak English as a second language, but this may be too simplistic. Among the proposed options is restructuring the students' year so that they are in school 10 weeks then off three weeks, with four such segments per year. Teachers would work in the classroom for three of these segments and have one off for professional development or another purpose that would improve their skills.

In February 2014, Generation Schools Network published a report titled *Cost-Effective Strategies for Extending Learning Time and Expanding Opportunity in K-12 Education*. It examines the implementation of the Generation Schools Network model in two urban turnaround schools, Brooklyn Generation School (grades 9-12) in Brooklyn, N.Y., and West Generation Academy (grades 6-12) in Denver, Colo.



According to the study, “cost-effective extended learning time has been achieved and positive results are significant and documented. The GSN Model has been largely tested within the bounds of existing resources while increasing learning opportunities through reduced class size, integrated curriculum, additional learning time, and a significant focus on college and career preparation.”

8. Add days to the existing structure.

These days should include student contact time, and must include days for teachers to plan, collaborate, analyze data, and improve their skills through professional development.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

Students should spend more days in school. Simply put, students are growing up in a world that is more competitive due to globalization than in the past. There is a much larger body of knowledge to impart to our students. The world we live in has a greater disparity of rich and poor, creating an opportunity gap that can be addressed if we extend the time students are in school.

The fast-changing world our students will be entering into as young adults requires a more flexible education system that requires educational leaders to rethink how they structure and deliver this education.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

Rising expectations have created a need to adjust the system within which teachers are working. Teachers need more time to prepare lessons, collaborate, analyze student data to individualize their instruction, and enhance their skills. Increased time would allow for all of these things to occur.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Parents

Members of the Idea Exchange were mindful of the various supports that exist for at-risk students. By providing these supports for struggling learners, parents will be able to see improvements in their children’s learning and development. If students are able to make progress and schools provide opportunities to meet all student needs, parents will have confidence their children are receiving what they need to be successful in school and life.



RECOMMENDATION 3

Create more opportunities for teachers to collaborate

Statement of the Problem

Collaboration among teachers is vital to success in 21st century teaching. Long gone are the days when teachers could independently plan and execute their instruction in isolation. Today's educational expectations require regular, systemic collaboration. Teachers must work together to assess students, assign students to instructional groups, deliver instruction in response to student data, and then assess again before repeating the process.

Research supports the idea that teams and buildings that find ways to make teacher collaboration central to their operations, especially employing a PLC model, achieve higher gains for students (Dufour, 2007). However, as the demands on teacher time have increased, time to collaborate becomes a rare commodity. Buildings and districts need to deliberately allocate time dedicated to teacher collaboration to maximize student outcomes.



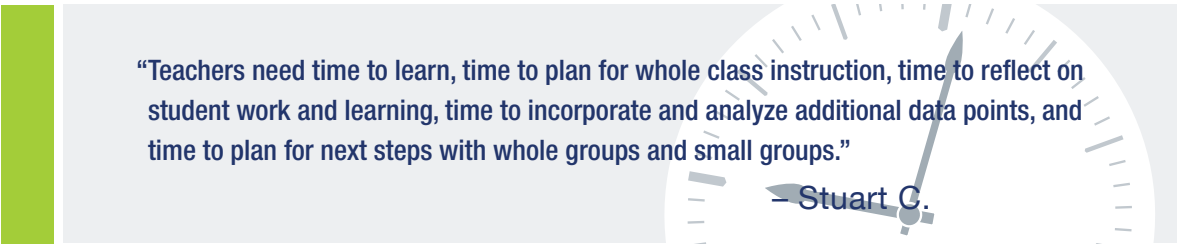
"I would like to allow teachers to have more collaboration time to plan and discuss student data." – Emily M.

"I would love to see more collaboration among all staff." – Robyn T.

Proposed Solutions

9. Audit and monitor the amount of time teachers have to collaborate.

It would be valuable to collect hard data on collaboration time across the state and track changes to that data over time. It would also be useful to evaluate if there is a correlation between teacher collaboration time and student achievement.



"Teachers need time to learn, time to plan for whole class instruction, time to reflect on student work and learning, time to incorporate and analyze additional data points, and time to plan for next steps with whole groups and small groups."

– Stuart C.

10. Identify schools that create the most opportunities for teachers to collaborate and study their time management systems.

There are excellent examples of highly collaborative schools in Colorado. By identifying and studying them, elements of their collaboration models could be replicated by other schools looking to increase their own collaboration.

11. Offer professional development for schools and teams to improve their effectiveness as collaborators.

There are excellent professional development providers who are knowledgeable in collaboration models and structures. The state could provide professional development opportunities for district staff across the state to enhance their collaboration structures and systems.

“Right now, we try to squeeze collaboration time in between instruction, and it’s just not as effective as it could be.” – Ryan H.

“Teachers would have time to meet vertically and horizontally to share experiences and build on what we already know, identify what we don’t know, and what we can improve on.” – Barb M.

12. Adjust the length of school days to create more collaboration days.

If the length of the school day were increased by 10 minutes, then every four weeks, students would have met their required number of minutes while also freeing up three hours for teacher collaboration. Under that system, students could be released early every four weeks to allow teachers to collaborate for three hours without cutting into student minutes.

“I would change the structure of the school day to support more time for special area teachers to collaborate with classroom teachers.”

– Katie M.

13. Extend the school year to create more collaboration days.

By extending the beginning or end of the school year, more days could be allocated for teacher collaboration. Districts could be directed to space out newly available collaboration days at strategic increments within the school year. For example, adding five collaboration days spaced six weeks apart would create six more six-week instructional blocks, at which point teachers could evaluate data and adjust instruction.



Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

By increasing opportunities for teachers to collaborate, the quality and specificity of the instruction delivered to students would improve. Teachers have the capacity to improve what is delivered to their students, but would benefit from support and structures that maximize opportunities to collaborate. When teachers collaborate, student data can be analyzed throughout the school year, instruction and placements can be continually adjusted, and instruction can be responsive to ongoing, formative data. Rather than “swinging for the fences” with major programs or initiatives, collaboration would create incremental, but systemic successes enabling continual improvement and success.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

Colorado schools are staffed with many talented, dedicated teachers. But, current demands on teachers make achieving consistent student success elusive even for many of our best. With more time to collaborate, educators across the state could realize their own capacities and improve student outcomes.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Parents

Relationships and partnerships are at the heart of public education. Collaboration is a welcoming process that invites all stakeholders to participate. Enhancing collaboration systems should create opportunities for parents to participate in their children’s education. Parent collaboration could improve between educators and school accountability committees, and between individual parents and teachers.





RECOMMENDATION 4

Re-evaluate the structure of student learning time

Statement of the Problem

As student expectations continue to increase, many teachers are concerned with how time with students is spent during the school day. Teachers throughout the state voiced concern over the lack of time dedicated to the following ideas: intervention, enrichment, character and community building, and student mastery over seat-time. All of these ideas require time to create and then time to spend with the student. The problem becomes how to fit this into an already crammed day. This section looks at the importance of these ideas in the context that restructuring the school day and year may be the first and most important step.

Proposed Solutions

14. Create dedicated time for student intervention and enrichment.

Reconfiguring the day would allow for dedicated time for students to work with teachers or coaches on needed skills, content, or enrichment opportunities. Teachers need to feel as though they can really use this time to work with students, not as time to get grading done or plan for the day.

15. Explore the option of using technology as a tool to achieve student mastery through personalized learning.

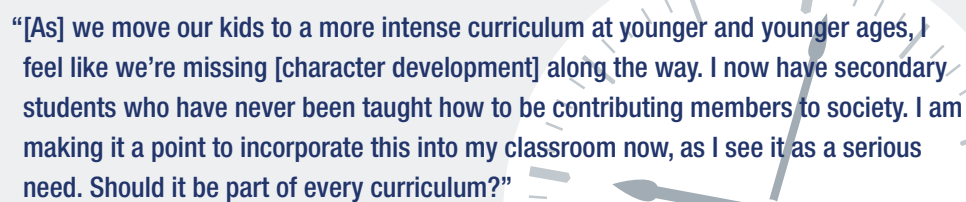
In 2012, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching received a grant to support research on the Carnegie Unit, which has been the basis for awarding of academic credit since the late 19th century. In announcing the grant, the foundation stated, “As expectations for schools and students have risen dramatically and technology has revealed the potential of personalized learning ... it is time to consider how a revised unit, based on competency rather than time, could improve teaching and learning in high schools, colleges, and universities.”

By allowing students to demonstrate their mastery of content and skills over “seat time,” teachers could engage students in project-based or experiential learning. This type of teaching often requires more planning time for the teachers, as well as time for students to dig in and get going on the project, which calls for more block-type scheduling. This type of learning and teaching allows students to work at their own pace on aspects of the content that interest them the most. This also relates to the idea of letting students take risks and learn from their failures, as discussed in “The Overprotected Kid,” published in the March 2014 edition of *The Atlantic*.

16. Create dedicated time for character and community building.

Examining schools that have character development and community building as a school focus needs to happen first. Then, time would need to be created in the school day and year for dedicated planning of character development for the teachers and implementation for the students. Advisory systems exist in many schools that create this focus on character development, which then creates an environment that allows students to take risks and find success in academic areas. Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) has been a leader in

the research and creation of well-run character development programs. According to ESR, “Advisory is a fundamental structure for middle and high school students to develop key life skills, metacognitive skills, and habits of learning in support of academic achievement, postsecondary planning, personal growth, and interpersonal skill development. Advisories create a more personalized learning environment where all students are well known by at least one adult through weekly small group meetings and one-to-one interactions.”



“[As] we move our kids to a more intense curriculum at younger and younger ages, I feel like we’re missing [character development] along the way. I now have secondary students who have never been taught how to be contributing members to society. I am making it a point to incorporate this into my classroom now, as I see it as a serious need. Should it be part of every curriculum?”

– Andrea L.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

Schools are much more than just a place for students to learn how to read, write and do some arithmetic. In the 21st century, students must learn how to communicate, collaborate, and think critically, as well as learn the basics skills of reading, writing and math. When adults take the time to teach to the whole student, the student can then perform at his or her best.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

Teachers want to give the students their best and ensure they are sending a well-rounded child into the greater society. When we can give dedicated time to enhancing the skills of the 21st century learner, as well as create time for intervention and character development, the teacher will find student success.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Parents

Parents want the best for their children. If this means an overhaul to the calendar year, it will be appreciated. The key to collaborating with parents is making a consistent schedule that does take parents’ job schedules into consideration. In the end, this reconfiguration of a schedule and time is meant to move students forward and to reach their own potential. Parents will need the why of the change explained to bring them into the conversation, but this is an important conversation to have.



Conclusion

Members of the Idea Exchange who examined the topic of extended learning time expressed a variety of perspectives that informed this report. Given the range of ideas, members of the Writing Collaborative acknowledged areas of disagreement and consensus in the four key recommendations and proposed solutions enumerated throughout this report. A common theme that emerged was the importance of integrating teacher and stakeholder perspectives as a vehicle for change.

Drawing upon the many perspectives of educators throughout Colorado, we believe our recommendations provide a solution-oriented approach to the following:

- 1) Restructuring the school day;
- 2) Restructuring the school year;
- 3) Creating more opportunities for teachers to collaborate; and
- 4) Re-evaluating the structure of time for learning.

Through our work, we advocate for time, support and resources that allow for restructuring efforts that drive 21st century learning opportunities for students. There must be consideration for the needed time and space to enhance teacher development and expertise. Extended time for learning is an important issue, and we are grateful for the opportunity to utilize our knowledge and insights based on many years of experience educating students in the state of Colorado.

EXPERIENTIAL Learning **TIME** TO COLLABORATE
RESTRUCTURE THE SCHOOL YEAR More ELECTIVES & SPORTS
Block Scheduling
MORE Time to Teach **SUPPORT** FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS
ENRICHMENT & INTERVENTIONS TIGHTER ASSESSMENT Cycles
Character Development **SUPPORT** FOR PARENTS

THE VIVA COLORADO EXTENDED LEARNING TIME IDEA EXCHANGE



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The Writing Collaborative



Greg Grote has been an elementary educator since 1988. He served as a classroom teacher for 20 years, elementary principal for one year, and now serves as the president of the Poudre Education Association in Fort Collins. He has held that position for five years. Greg also serves as a director on the National Education Association Board of Directors, and is part of the Colorado Education Association Executive Committee. He has been committed to improving the world since his days in high school in Denver. Greg's experiences have provided him with a plethora of opportunities to be part of education policy discussion, and he utilizes his thousands of conversations with educators across his district, the state and the country to inform his ideas and advocacy.



Nancy Hahn has been teaching for 15 years, and cannot recall a time since middle school that her life was not full of children. After years of babysitting, working at summer camps, teaching preschool, and raising babies, she knew it was time to return to school to finish her teaching degree. Today, she is teaching language arts, Read 180, and writing intervention to seventh and eighth graders in Jefferson, Colo.

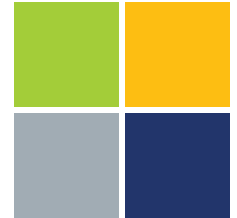


Ryan Howard is a fifth grade teacher at Mary Blair Elementary School in the Thompson School District, where he has been teaching since 2007. His passion in the classroom is for each of his students to take responsibility for his or her own learning. Ryan's classroom is usually pretty loud and messy, but pop by and you'll hopefully hear dynamic conversations between excited learners. Ryan holds an M.Ed. in sports management from the University of Texas, and an EdS. in Education Leadership from the University of Northern Colorado. He lives with his family in Loveland, Colo.



Megan Orvis is a seventh year teacher with an M.A. in Education and an M.A. in Educational Leadership from George Washington University. She currently teaches U.S. History and World Geography at Eagle Valley High School in Gypsum, Colo. She has experience teaching English and social studies to eighth through 12th graders. She is also working on creating social studies curriculum for the Eagle County School District, and knows firsthand how valuable time is to teachers.

The VIVA Colorado Extended Learning Time Idea Exchange was moderated by Harrington Gibson.



New Voice Strategies

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 5,000 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.

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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 President of UpSpring Education Group, a national network of highly experienced education practitioners and nonprofit leaders who support the strategic, instructional, and operational work of school superintendents, public charter leaders, and education organizations across the U.S. and abroad. 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 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. Burger retired as Secretary-Treasurer of SEIU, the nation's fastest growing union, after serving from 2001 to 2010. In 2006 and 2009, Burger was named one of Washingtonian magazine's 100 Most Powerful Women.

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 advisor to businesses and nonprofits.

ELIZABETH EVANS (Ex officio) is the Founding CEO of New Voice Strategies. She has over 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, gathering community-based input and bringing innovative approaches to solving difficult policy problems, focusing on education policy for the last 12 years. Previously, she spent 10 years as a courtroom litigator for the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.

JOHN HUSSEY is Chief Strategy Officer at Battelle for Kids. John provides organizational and strategic oversight for Battelle for Kids and the organization's clients in the area 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 following law firms: Sidley & Austin, Altheimer & Gray, and Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon.

ASHLEY WARLICK (Chair) teaches elementary school in the Cambridge, Mass., Public Schools. She has a concentration in teaching students with special needs and brings a strong interest in the arts to her work. She serves on the Board of Directors of her school's affiliated nonprofit organization, which brings urgently needed resources to the students at the school.

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