



**Testimony by Jeff Smink, New York State Director, National Center on Time & Learning,
Regarding Governor Cuomo's proposal to establish a grant program for expanded learning time**

January 29, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the proposal by Governor Cuomo in his FY 14 budget to expand learning time for students throughout New York through a competitive grant. The National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to expanding learning time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education. Through research, public policy, and technical assistance, we support national, state, and local initiatives that add significantly more school time for academic and enrichment opportunities to help children meet the demands of the 21st century.

Landscape

Expanded learning time (ELT) is rapidly becoming a key education reform strategy across the nation and NCTL has identified more than 1,000 schools with redesigned and expanded school calendars across 36 states. With its charter and pilot schools, New York is already among the leading states on this issue with 55 schools with expanded-time schedules.

Additionally, in December 2012, NCTL and the Ford Foundation announced the TIME Collaborative, a multi-year initiative to develop high-quality and sustainable expanded learning time schools in five states, including New York. Currently, the Rochester City School District is participating in the TIME Collaborative and has eight schools working in an intensive six-month planning process led by NCTL and key local partners.

Given the current interest and activity already underway in New York, Governor Cuomo's proposal would further position the state as a national ELT leader and help districts plan and implement sustainable, innovative, high-quality programming across the state.

Research and Impact

Research shows that the amount of time students engage in learning is one of the strongest indicators of their level of achievement.

- In his research, Harvard University economist Roland Fryer has found that two of the strongest predictors of higher achievement were schools with instructional time of at least 300 more hours (than surrounding schools) and that offered high-dosage tutoring.¹
- Similarly, Stanford University economist Caroline Hoxby conducted a multivariate analysis of New York City charter schools to identify the association of specific school policies to student outcomes. She and her colleagues found that those who attended charter schools with a

significantly longer school year performed better on state assessments than their peers in charter schools with years of more conventional length. Most of the charters in this study that feature a longer year also offer a longer day, so those two features can be considered as a unit.ⁱⁱ

Additionally, our work with schools participating in the Massachusetts ELT initiative, a state policy initiative begun in 2005, shows that:

- In aggregate, Massachusetts ELT schools continue to show progress in proficiency in all tested subjects
- Massachusetts ELT schools considerably outperform the majority of high-poverty MA schools in reaching high-growth levels and avoiding low-growth levels
- Several schools continue to demonstrate that more time used well can narrow and in some cases eliminate achievement gaps with the stateⁱⁱⁱ

Funding and cost

Based on our experience in Massachusetts and other states, we believe Governor Cuomo's proposal to fund up to \$1,500 per student for ELT is a sufficient and reasonable amount. In Massachusetts, funding is at a similar level and no districts have dropped out of the ELT initiative due to funding levels. Additionally, this funding level helps encourage sustainability and cost-effective strategies that help keep costs down, including staggered schedules for teachers; strategic use of community partners and teaching specialists, and use of technology and blended learning.

Policy Recommendations

For the past seven years, NCTL has been working with states as they have worked to redesign and expand learning time. Based on our experience, we recommend seven key policies that can help make expanded time most effective. Governor Cuomo's budget proposal includes all of these recommendations.

Expanding learning time for all students. We believe that schools must expand learning time for all students in the school. When schools only target the additional support for some students, the instructional focus becomes remedial, rather than an opportunity to re-imagine and re-design the whole educational program for all students.

Addition of significant time. Our work has shown that the most effective schools add a significant number of hours to the school year (i.e., 300 hours to the school year beyond the traditional schedule of 180 6.5-hour days). The addition of significant time to the school day or year encourages school leaders to work with their teachers and stakeholders to redesign their program rather than tinker around the edges.

Redesigning school calendar. The additional time should be spread across three areas: (a) core academics, including individualized instruction and project-based learning; (b) enrichments, including music, arts, drama, physical education, science extensions, and apprenticeships; and (c) teacher collaboration and professional development.

Start Expanded-time Initiatives with a pilot program. By starting with a pilot program, states are able to fund those districts and schools that are both ready and able to make the deep changes necessary to redesign their school schedules for all students from the ground up.

Incentivize districts and schools through a competitive grant process. Expanding learning time in a traditional district school comes with several challenges. NCTL's research demonstrates that the districts and schools with the most impressive results are those with strong leadership and a committed staff. By incentivizing districts and schools to submit applications through a competitive process, it ensures that only those schools most capable of doing the challenging work of school redesign will be able to proceed.

Leveraging a planning process. This planning process can last six to nine months and can be used to develop a plan to submit to the state as part of the official application process. The districts and schools can use the planning process as a time to engage their stakeholders (e.g., union leaders, teachers, community leaders, and parents) in productive conversations and decisions that are crucial to the success of an expanded learning time school. This is currently happening in Rochester, where the Rochester Teachers Association has been deeply involved and supportive of the current ELT work underway.

Funding only the strongest plans to implement ELT. Once the state has received applications from interested schools, the state should fund only those plans from districts and schools that demonstrate the ability to implement a redesigned and expanded school day and/or year well. Based on our experience in Massachusetts and across the country, the funding proposed in Governor Cuomo's budget should remove cost as a barrier for any district who wants to expand learning time for their students.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony to the committee. We applaud your state's leadership on this issue. Please feel free to contact me if NCTL can be of any assistance.

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ⁱ Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer, Jr., "Getting Beneath the Veil of Effective Schools: Evidence from New York City," NBER Working Paper, No. 17632, December 2011.

ⁱⁱ Caroline Hoxby and Sonali Murarka, "New York City Charter Schools: How Well are They Teaching Their Students?," *Education Next*, Summer 2008: pp. 54-61.

ⁱⁱⁱ 2011 MCAS data

