Bienne Elementary and Meylan High Schools
Glycine School District, Connecticut*

This is one of four state and 11 district case study papers from the Center on Education Policy (CEP) describing expanded learning time (ELT) initiatives. The major findings from all of the case studies are presented in the CEP summary report Expanded Learning Time: A Summary of Findings from Case Studies in Four States.

Key Findings

• **The Glycine School District implemented both districtwide and school-specific expanded learning time initiatives over the last few years.** Independently of the federal requirements, district leaders worked with the teacher’s union to include some ELT initiatives as part of the collective bargaining process. School and district officials agreed that the additional time is important but is merely one component of more comprehensive improvement strategies underway in their schools.

• **Funding and sustainability of the ELT and school improvement initiatives are challenges at the district and school levels in Glycine.** Sustainability is a particular concern for the Glycine schools that receive federal School Improvement Grants (SIG), which have ended at Bienne Elementary and will end soon at Meylan High School. A districtwide ELT policy, however, has enabled Bienne to maintain some elements of the initiatives implemented under SIG. The district and the high school also face challenges associated with teacher and staff turnover.

• **Both case study schools in the Glycine district used federal 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants for afterschool programs focused on academic and enrichment activities.** Often, the enrichment activities helped to keep students engaged in school, according to school officials. District and school officials agreed that it was best not to change the current use of 21st CCLC funds to support ELT during the regular school day, which is an optional flexibility afforded under Connecticut’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver.

*To encourage frank responses from local interviewees, we have used pseudonyms for the case study districts and schools and for individuals interviewed in these sites. For the state-level interviewees, however, we have used the individuals’ real names.
Background

Bienne Elementary and Meylan High Schools are two of the eight schools in Connecticut’s Glycine School District, which enrolls roughly 3,000 students. Bienne Elementary serves students in kindergarten through grade 4, and Meylan High includes grades 9 through 12 (see tables 1 and 2 for more school information). Both schools received federal School Improvement Grants, and both are considered “turnaround” or priority schools under Connecticut’s ESEA waiver, which means that they are among the lowest 5% achieving schools in the state.

### Table 1. Bienne Elementary School information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades*</th>
<th>K-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locale*</td>
<td>Town (distant from large urban core)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial demographics**</td>
<td>Hispanic, white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage free and reduced lunch**</td>
<td>Roughly 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>Fewer than 500 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student to teacher ratio*</td>
<td>Fewer than 15 students per teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has or had a school improvement grant</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIG intervention model</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st CCLC funds in 2013-14</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has been or is a priority school under state waiver</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From CCD Public school data 2010-11, 2011-12 school years.

**From Connecticut Education Data and Research’s district and school snapshots, 2011-12 school year.

Note: To protect the anonymity of schools all figures are approximations.

### School Context

**Bienne Elementary**

District leadership chose the transformation school improvement model at Bienne Elementary, so the school principal, Mr. Fischer, was new to the school during the first year of SIG implementation in 2010-11. (Bienne’s grant has since ended.) At the time of data...
collection for this study, Principal Fischer had moved from Bienne to another school in the Glycine district. Principal Fischer explained that there was—and still is—a very warm, nurturing, and trusting climate at Bienne. He continued:

> [When I joined Bienne] the school was definitely a source of pride. It was definitely a community center for them. There was a strong trust between the school and the families. Even though there wasn’t a track record of academic achievement, the strength of the school was that the parents and families really trusted the staff that was there—it was a very close-knit community . . . My first move was working on making the school into what was called a ‘warm demander’ because it was outwardly clear that it was a warm, trusting school. Parents felt safe there, kids felt safe there, and staff felt safe there. Frequently when people would come visit, they would imagine what Bienne would be like and they’d be like “This is a nice school. The kids are happy. They’re smiling.” And I was like, “Yeah, that’s not the problem.”

Fischer said there was no academic rigor, so improving the school’s academic culture while maintaining its nurturing aspects was a central component of his school improvement strategy. He noted that while “it’s important to be nice and to be warm and to be loving to [the students], it’s just as important to arm them with skills of reading and arithmetic to go along with that.” Toward that end, Fischer sought to emphasize academics and explain the rationale for doing so to teachers and parents at Bienne.

**Meylan High School**

Principal Walser, one of the two principals at Meylan High School that we interviewed, had been at the school since the year before the school received a SIG. Similar to Bienne Elementary, Glycine district officials chose the transformation model at the high school. Walser felt this was the “best fit for the school.” He explained:

> For the past 10 years the scores have been going down. There have been problematic issues that hadn’t been resolved—the largest achievement gap in the state. We really had to do some major work to make some changes in our structure of the building, our instructional practices . . . What we shifted to is, instead of a comprehensive high school, we now are a high school of academies.

The school was organized into two academies—one for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and the other one for Humanities and Arts.

Roughly 65% of the student population at Meylan High School is Latino and 20% are English language learners. To meet the needs of this student population, school officials said they are trying to start a dual language school emphasizing Spanish and English, which would feed into the humanities program in both academies.

The declines in test scores over the years have been accompanied by decreases in student
enrollment. Principal Vogel, another principal at the school, said that the Glycine district has a problem with students opting out of attending Meylan High School. So, the school leaders have focused on developing the school's academies and offering enrichment classes to help “bring the student body back,” she said. “[T]he perception out there is that we’re an out-of-control school, and that perception is formed by people that never even walk into the school, and that’s unfortunate.”

Roughly 20% of the students at Meylan are doing very well in the Advanced Placement program offered at the school, said Walser. But “on the flip side, we have a number of students that are many grades below grade level for reading . . . and don’t have the math skills.” School improvement strategies, including a new schedule and ELT opportunities, have been put in place at Meylan High School to address the needs of its students.

**Expanded Learning Time Strategies**

**Glycine School District**

District officials in Glycine thought they were “ahead of the game with regard to the [ELT] process” when they decided in 2010 to add 30 extra minutes to the regular school day in all of the district’s schools, according to the superintendent. The district chose to phase in this approach over two years by adding 15 minutes in 2011-12, the first year of implementation, and another 15 minutes the next year. This extension of time was built into a new teacher contract through the traditional collective bargaining process and was detailed in a memorandum of understanding between the Glycine school board and the teacher’s union. One district leader explained that rather than funding this extra staff time as a separate salary item, the new contract raised teachers’ salaries by a specific amount over three years and extended the school day as part of a package.

District officials further explained that they used an existing 90-minute block of time after school on Mondays, which was already a component of teachers’ contracts, for a variety of activities such as professional development, collaboration, and faculty meetings. The school board and teacher’s union also agreed to increase the number of days dedicated to professional development for teachers across the district under the new contract.

The districtwide lengthening of the school day occurred at the same time some of its individual schools had begun to implement or plan their own ELT initiatives, including Bienne Elementary, which was in its second year of SIG implementation, and Meylan High, in its first year of a SIG. While these two schools tailored ELT to their unique circumstances, as explained below, the districtwide initiative offered a sustainable framework for ELT once the SIGs expired.

In addition, a few other schools in the district have begun to partner with the National Center on Time and Learning’s TIME Collaborative to work on extending their school days; these schools are still in the beginning planning stages. (The Glycine School District is categorized by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as an "Alliance
District,” and working with the TIME Collaborative is one of the school improvement options under the state program, as explained later in box 1.)

*Bienne Elementary School*

During the first year of SIG, Bienne expanded the regular school day by 45 minutes—15 minutes more than the district would require two years later. Principal Fischer explained that within this expanded schedule, the school was able to ensure the teachers had 60 minutes of common planning time each day by using SIG funds to hire “specials” teachers (full-time art and music teachers as well as a full-time librarian); this made it possible for students to take 60 minutes of non-core classes every day while the regular teachers have 60 minutes of common planning time. At the time, Fischer noted, Bienne was the only school in the district with a full-time, certified librarian.

Under SIG, Bienne also hired a literacy facilitator and a data facilitator. These staff worked with the students and teachers on data-driven decision making and specific interventions targeted to each student’s needs. Fischer explained:

In the past, if the kid was struggling with reading, they would just do an out-of-the box program that was a one-size-fits-all reading intervention program . . . So, what we did, we got very scientific with a lot of that Reading First research—hence the reading facilitator—and we got very specific about what [the students’] skill sets were. They’d be delivered specifically to those kids. We were [grouping] kids all over the place and it was like an amoeba. We were following and moving kids. If kids grew [in their reading skills], they’d move to a different group, so we were very fluid with the kids’ needs.

Students who were already meeting proficiency goals on the state tests worked with the librarian on enrichment activities, so this expanded time was tailored to meet the learning needs of all students at the school.

Finally, twice a week the 60-minute blocks of common planning time for teachers were focused on analyzing student performance data in teams. On Tuesdays, teachers had numeracy data teams and on Thursdays they participated in literacy data teams. In the first year of SIG implementation, Fischer said, teachers were “stressed” about the standards and use of data, so the professional development and extra time enabled them to “learn how to do that better” and build expertise. Fischer characterized this common planning time, learning from one another, as “massive collaboration.”

Unfortunately, he reported, when the SIG funding ended Bienne was unable to maintain the full amount of 45 additional minutes during the regular school day. However, because the district had added 30 extra minutes to the day over the course of two years, the school day decreased by just 15 minutes total. Bienne also lost the two data facilitators when the SIG ended, said Fischer. The school was able to maintain the music and art teachers but went from a certified to an uncertified librarian.
Meylan High School

Meylan High School received SIG funding with the next cohort of grantees a year after Bienne Elementary. In the first year of implementation, the high school added 30 minutes of time to the regular school day, the same amount required by the districtwide ELT model. However, Meylan added all 30 minutes at once during its first year of SIG implementation instead of phasing it in by 15-minute increments over two years.

In the first year of its SIG funding, the school also moved from a traditional semester to a trimester schedule during the regular school year, not counting summer school. Principal Walser said they moved to a trimester schedule with an embedded credit recovery program (for students who needed to make up credits in courses that they failed and that they need to graduate on time) because they had a high number of repeat freshman and sophomores at Meylan High School. In a trimester system, he explained, students who failed the first trimester of a course like geometry would have an additional opportunity to retake and pass that course segment in the second trimester and move on to the next segment of the course; he explained the rationale for this shift with the following example:

We moved to the trimester because we had students that weren’t successful in the first semester—in, let’s say, geometry. But in the second semester they’d take second semester geometry. If they didn’t have the skills, they wouldn’t be successful, and then we end up teaching them summer school . . . [W]ith a trimester . . . if somebody doesn’t pass geometry 1A first trimester, they take it second trimester. And then if they pass they can go to geometry 1B . . . And then if they don’t pass that [in the third trimester] they have summer school. So, basically they have four opportunities to pass their required courses so that they can transition to a sophomore [in the next school year]. Because we know that students that stay with their cohort will graduate on time more often then those that don’t.

Meylan High School also offers an afterschool program with a range of activities. Students can explore extracurricular activities or receive tutoring by certified teachers—including many of the school’s regular teachers. The afterschool activities are differentiated based on students’ educational needs. The regular school day runs from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The afterschool program begins at 2:30 and is offered four days per week.

Students may also join the school’s dinner program and “receive a wholesome, freshly prepared meal between the hours of 4:00 and 6:00 p.m.,” said Walser. Transportation home is provided to the students, but slots within the program are limited. Meylan principals and Glycine district officials reported that the afterschool and dinner programs at Meylan are popular with the students and their parents.

As part of the SIG, Meylan hired a data facilitator and literacy facilitator to assist teachers with monitoring students’ progress and then targeting school interventions and support to
students who need it. The school is implementing literacy interventions in which all of the school’s teachers work with students on vocabulary, reading and writing across all classes. Meylan also purchased an online credit recovery program, available to students who need it.

**Funding**

*State and Local Funds*

The Connecticut State Department of Education designated the Glycine district as an Alliance District (see box 1 for more information). With this designation comes supplemental state funding and resources that may be used across schools in the district for specific categories, including talent (employing systems and strategies to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, and retain excellent school leaders, teachers, and support staff), academics, operation, school climate, and culture. District leaders confirmed that in theory this state money could be used for ELT under the academics category; however, one district official noted that “the cost of expanding time can add up quickly, especially when you are trying to accomplish other tasks too.” District leaders explained that in allocating Alliance District funding, they must take a more holistic view of all their school improvement initiatives rather than focusing on ELT exclusively.

The Glycine district has one “Commissioner’s Network” school. These schools receive additional funding and resources from the CSDE but are also required to use “time effectively as evidenced by the redesign of the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration” (CSDE, 2013a, p. 4). District leaders said they chose to work with the National Center on Time and Learning to help plan these initiatives within this particular school.
Box 1. State programs for district and school improvement in Connecticut

**Priority School Districts.** The priority School district program was established to provide support for school districts “with the greatest academic need” (CSDE, 2013b). The program funds an array of activities, such as dropout prevention, early reading interventions, and instructional technology, as well as initiatives to strengthen parent involvement and school accreditation. (Priority School Districts are different from “priority schools,” which Connecticut refers to as “turnaround schools.”)

**Alliance Districts.** This program is a targeted investment in the state’s 30 lowest-performing districts. Connecticut General Statute Section 10-262u established a process for identifying Alliance Districts and allocating increased Education Cost Sharing funding to support district strategies to “dramatically increase student outcomes and close achievement gaps by pursuing bold and innovative reforms” (CSDE, 2014). The districts must apply to the state for a formula grant and outline their proposed use of the funds. These districts submit plans to improve student achievement, which are approved by the Commissioner. During the 2014-15 school year, 14 Alliance Districts also qualify as Priority School Districts.

**Commissioner’s Network Schools.** This program provides resources to the lowest-performing schools in the state. The state Commissioner selects these schools, and all of the state’s turnaround/priority schools are eligible. Although Network schools remain a part of their local district, they receive greater flexibility and autonomy than other schools “in exchange for heightened accountability” (CSDE, 2013a). As of August of 2014, there were 11 schools participating in the program.

**Federal Funds**

Both Bienne Elementary and Meylan High School received federal SIG funds, some of which were allocated to ELT initiatives. For example, each of these schools agreed to a specific memorandum of understanding with the local teacher’s union for specific aspects of their ELT initiatives that were partially paid for by federal SIG funds. At Bienne, teachers worked an extra 10% of time and received compensation for that time. Principal Fischer noted that this amounted to roughly $5,000 to $6,000 of extra salary per teacher per year. The staff at Bienne was also awarded a performance incentive based on student achievement gains during the first two years under SIG. Meylan High School used SIG funds to fill the salary gap the first year when the school added a full 30 minutes to the school day.

The Glycine district is actively seeking ways to fund school improvement initiatives that were previously covered by the SIG at Bienne and that will no longer be funded by the SIG at Meylan when the grant period ends this year. District officials reported that they have tried to do this under their general budget when possible. Principal Fischer said that Bienne has sustained 30 of the 45 minutes added to the school day through the districtwide extended time policy. It has also maintained the specials teachers, but lost its literacy and data facilitators when the grant ended. Meylan High School is in its final year of SIG funding. Walser said he is worried about losing the “people resources,” specifically those associated with the literacy program. “[The hope is that if the whole district is working on literacy as the students progress through the school system, then they’re more prepared
when they get here,” he added.

Under Connecticut’s approved ESEA waiver, school districts no longer need to reserve the so-called “20% set-aside” funds under the Title I program for transportation related to public school choice and supplemental tutoring services in schools identified for improvement. Instead these funds can be used to expand learning time in Title I-funded schools and for other school improvement activities. District leaders in Glycine reported that these Title I set-aside funds are being used to maintain staffing rather than supporting ELT in particular.

Several Glycine schools receive federal 21st CCLC grants, which are currently used for afterschool programs. Under Connecticut’s approved ESEA waiver, these 21st CCLC funds can be used to expand learning time during the school day, rather than just before or after school or during the summer. However, one Glycine district leader explained that “based on the characteristics of our community and the success of our current programs, I couldn’t foresee curtailing our current before or after school programs.” Another district leader elaborated:

And it wouldn’t be just the one-for-one swap—the cost of extending our day with all of our certified staff greatly outreaches what it costs to put on the afterschool programs, which are generally staffed by noncertified folks. It's just more economical.

The principals at Bienne Elementary and Meylan High agreed that it is best not to shift 21st CCLC programs to support ELT during the regular school day. Some of the afterschool programs at the high school are focused on enrichment rather than pure academics, said Walser, and this is really important to his students. “They need that—the sustainability of academics for students. You can’t keep increasing the time. It’s not going to be successful. The enrichment is the key piece. It has to be a different way of learning.”

Challenges

Staff Turnover

There is very little taxable industry in the community served by the Glycine district, which limits the local tax base for education, according to district leaders. Although a significant proportion of the municipality’s budget is allocated to education, the total funding available is lower than the state average and most of the surrounding districts, one district official explained. This fiscal reality constrains the Glycine district’s ability to offer competitive pay for school staff, even though its schools have higher needs.

Consequently, Glycine often loses teachers to neighboring districts with better pay, said Fischer. “We’re a . . . high demand, low-pay district, so that’s part of the issue here,” he said. Principals Walser and Vogel at the high school echoed these sentiments about teacher
retention and general turnover. Walser said that when they began the redesign process “not everyone wanted to support it . . . I have probably hired, in the past four years, 40 teachers.” (Meylan High School employs about 70 teachers throughout the school year.) Teacher turnover also creates challenges with aspects of implementing school improvement initiatives, such as implementing data teams and doing progress monitoring, Walser said:

So then you have a lot of first- and second-year teachers and they’re going through their process of teacher training, and we’ll work with them and support them. And then we have a lot of change—our teachers go on to other districts.

A district official estimated that over the past three years, the teacher attrition rate has been almost 50%. Another district leader added, “It’s a tough place to work that’s surrounded by easier places to work.” Further, leaders at both case study schools agreed that turnover among the district’s central office staff has also been challenging.

Bienne Elementary School

Principal Fischer said he did not face any challenges that were directly connected to the ELT initiatives at Bienne:

There were no challenges. I didn’t know any better because I wasn’t there before there was the addition. So, I only knew it with the extra 45 minutes, and really, there were no issues. I built the schedule that first summer before school started, and we added reading time and math time.

Glycine district officials also reported few challenges at Bienne. One district leader said:

I don’t think [Bienne] had that many challenges. I think when the leadership came on board . . . he made it very clear, this is our challenge and we are going to make the scores go up. He said he was going to do it, and he did it. And then the next year was even worse because he had to maintain it. Not only did he maintain it, he increased it . . .

Fischer did report challenges with sustaining some of the SIG initiatives after the grant ended. As noted above, the school lost its literacy and data facilitators. The principal also said he worked hard to make sure struggling teachers were not reassigned from neighboring schools in the district to Bienne, although it did happen one year when he was principal.

A final challenge pertained to the physical state of the Bienne Elementary building, which had been neglected over the years, Fischer said. In the summer of 2013, just before school was scheduled to start, a building engineer determined the roof was not structurally sound. The students and staff had to be moved to a neighboring school. Additionally, with the
increases in test scores in the prior year, there had been an increase in enrollment. Therefore, the students and staff were juggling several disruptions. “It was rough—you ended up adding 100 kids in that third year,” Fischer commented. “We had the roof thing, moving to the new building, the principal [Mr. Fischer] left—the poor school got hammered in one year… the grant was finishing out.”

**Meylan High School and the District**

Principals at Meylan High School reported that the teacher turnover issues described above posed a challenge. A large percentage of the high school’s teachers moved to other positions or left the district during the school redesign process, which made it necessary to continually train new teachers. School leaders added that it has been tough to change the outside perception of the school—being labeled as a turnaround school under district and state monitoring negatively affects teacher recruitment as well as student enrollment.

Coming up on the end of the SIG funding, Principals Walser and Vogel worry about sustaining their people resources. Walser specifically mentioned the school’s literacy and data facilitators:

> [With] the literacy facilitator [and] the data facilitator, we’re trying to do a lot of interventions to increase our baseline skills of our students. The biggest challenge is, without that support how are we going to continue those programs with the teachers that we have?

Neither Walser nor Vogel cited challenges with adding 30 minutes of time to the regular school day or with their current afterschool programs and initiatives. Principal Walser and Glycine district officials did, however, talk about the challenges of implementing multiple changes simultaneously. Walser cautioned:

> Implementing a lot of change at once is really difficult. You’re doing multiple things at the same time, but in some situations you have to make rapid change because whatever’s been in place hasn’t been working for a while… Not everyone is going to be happy… The primary focus is to say, okay, what’s in the best interests of the students and pick one or two things to focus on, not 20. Easy to say and hard to do.

Performance data have not shown the same levels of success at Meylan High as at Bienne Elementary, district officials said. Both of the district-level interviewees noted that multiple variables have impacted Meylan and its achievement, so it’s hard to isolate just one variable such as ELT. One district-level interviewee also spoke to the difficulty of juggling several reform initiatives simultaneously, even when the underlying ideas are good, and suggested that the district may need to streamline its the school improvement initiatives in the future:

> Every once in a while, I think we need to say, no thank you. And that’s a hard
thing to do when you feel like you are so extremely underfunded. But nonetheless, I think that’s the future of the district—saying no offense, that’s a great idea, but it’s not in alignment with our strategic planning and we’re not going to do that right now. If we can do a little more of that, then I think the district improves over time.

Progress with ELT

Bienne Elementary School

Since Bienne Elementary received a SIG in 2010, the total percentage of its students scoring proficient in reading and math on state tests has increased by at least 10 percentage points in each tested grade, and far more in some grades. Principal Fischer attributed these achievement gains to multiple school improvement initiatives, including the increased focus on academic rigor, use of data, common planning time for teachers, and the longer school day. While the additional learning time has been important, he said, it would not have made a notable difference if the time had not been well-focused and tied to other data-driven academic reforms:

What was most important was the accountability of learning. So, we took the learning standards, and we really made sure that we unwrapped them. What we did was really focus on academic rigor with the kids.

Fischer said the school already had a very nurturing atmosphere for its students, which he wanted to retain while also increasing academic rigor. At the beginning of the SIG implementation, the school staff were all asked to reapply for their positions at Bienne; the district told teachers they could opt out and be reassigned to another school. None of the teachers chose the reassignment option, and Fischer reported that all of them wanted to come back to the school under the new agreement. Therefore, Bienne did not face the challenge of teacher turnover that has been an issue for the high school and other schools in the district.

One of the first things Fischer noticed was that the students did not seem to have the stamina to work hard on the assessments and other assignments, so the school took steps to recognize students’ efforts. Teachers began with small milestones—reading for six minutes one day then moving to seven minutes the next, said Fischer:

We made charts about how we were building [students] up so that they could sit for 45 minutes on a reading task. Everybody thinks we split the atom or we were doing advanced calculus. We really weren’t. We were just getting them used to having a lot of that stamina build up for them. And the kids were proud. They were actually very proud of themselves once it was clear what the expectations were . . . There were some really dynamic teachers that were involved in the salesmanship of that to the kids . . . We had rubrics where the kids were assessing themselves on whether or not they stayed on task.
District leaders said they felt Bienne’s school improvement efforts, including the additional time and common planning time dedicated to using data for teachers, were successful because the school leader and staff were collaborative, clear, and focused. One district leader referred to the intensity of focus:

“There was one room that they dedicated just to data. This is where the data discussions were [held] with all of your grade-level team teachers, all of your support staff—whether it’s special ed or ELL and others, their data facilitator. They all came together, and they had the same mindset. The structural focus there was very clear. The kids knew it, the parents knew it, and the staff knew it.”

*Meylan High School*

Meylan High School’s graduation rate has increased by 10% since the beginning of the SIG grant under the trimester scheduling and academy structures, according to Principal Walser. The number of students who failed two or more classes has also decreased by about 25%. In addition, the Advanced Placement program has expanded, and the school climate has become more strongly focused on academics. “[T]here has been a huge change in our school climate, and there’s been a huge change in the instruction that’s taking place in the classroom,” said Walser.

When asked specifically about the additional 30 minutes of time during the school day, Walser said that the ELT component was just “one piece of a major restructuring and redesign.” The school is changing its focus—“the teachers, the students, we’re still trying to manage those students who have difficulties, but we’re on track.”

**District and School Leadership Perceptions of ELT**

Glycine district officials said they felt that expanding learning time is one component of a much larger, more comprehensive improvement plan. As one leader noted, “you can expand student learning but if you don’t know how to do it and do it right, it doesn’t matter.” Another district leader viewed ELT more as an “opportunity to have effective strategies” than as a strategy unto itself. He explained:

“What [ELT] does is provide more space for strategies. So, we know that teachers meeting in data teams … teachers sitting down together to make informed decisions about how they teach and knowing who they teach—their kids—that’s an effective strategy. Meaningful professional development, that’s an effective strategy. Finding time for all those things to occur is tough. So the time simply provides the space for us to do that …

Principal Fischer at Bienne Elementary felt the extra time has helped with the school’s overall improvement initiatives. “Without that extra time, it would have been really hard,”
he added. The schedule change affected all the students, he said, and students showed growth at every achievement level. For example, the school offered enrichment opportunities for students who were already meeting proficiency benchmarks, and many of this group moved from the proficient to the advanced achievement level on the state assessment. The extra time was “good for everybody,” he said. He concluded with this observation:

I think [the expanded learning time requirement under SIG] was one of the big reasons why there was improvement. But it could be squandered easily . . . It’s got to be purposeful time. It’s got to be accountable time, but it is important to have that extra time. A six and a half hour day is crazy. That’s not enough time for kids to be in school.

Principal Walser at Meylan High School noted that while the additional time is important, the enrichment and extracurricular offerings are “really important” for the school’s students. “The sustainability of academics for students, you can’t keep increasing the time. It’s not going to be successful. The enrichment is the key piece—it has to be a different way of learning,” he concluded.

References


