Expanded Learning Time in Connecticut:
State Initiatives Mirror Federal Program Requirements*

Key Findings

- **Expanded learning time is an essential component of both federal and state-level programs for school improvement in Connecticut.** In addition to federal requirements or encouragements for ELT in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) models, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver provisions, the state of Connecticut also requires its Priority School Districts and Commissioner's Network schools to offer some form of ELT. Further, Connecticut allows its state-designated Alliance School Districts the option of including an ELT component in their school improvement plans and in their overall Alliance District Plans.

- **Collaboration between teachers' unions and districts and schools has been crucial to the successful implementation of ELT in Connecticut.** Interviewees noted that union cooperation was important during the planning and implementation of ELT initiatives, which often required changes to teacher contracts.

- **Interviewees cited three major challenges to implementing ELT in the state.** First, many districts and schools are simultaneously managing multiple school improvement initiatives, which can overwhelm school staff. Second, districts and schools often have difficulty coordinating professional development providers and community partners to support ELT implementation, and states have limited capacity to provide technical assistance on ELT to districts and schools. Third,

* 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.
interviewees viewed securing and sustaining funding for ELT programs as a major challenge.

**Background**

After the 2009 passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Connecticut awarded three-year School Improvement Grants to a first cohort of 14 schools beginning in fall 2010 (Hurlburt, Le Floch, Therriault, & Cole, 2011), and to a second cohort of 5 additional schools beginning in fall 2011 (Hurlburt, Therriault, & Le Floch, 2012). Two of the four SIG school improvement models, transformation and turnaround, require schools to “establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased time” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 27). (For more information on the SIG or priority schools under the ESEA waivers see Appendix A.) Of the 19 Connecticut schools that received SIG awards in one of these cohorts, 17 selected a transformation or turnaround model and must implement ELT strategies, while the other two schools adopted the restart model.

On May 29, 2012, the request by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) for a waiver of ESEA requirements was approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Following this approval, the state identified its lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools as priority schools for school year 2012-13, based on their overall student performance in reading and math and also on graduation rates in the case of high schools. Federal guidance requires these priority schools to include ELT as an element of their improvement plans. CSDE refers to priority schools as “turnaround schools” to avoid confusion with the state’s Priority School District program. There were 28 turnaround/priority schools for school year 2013-14 across Connecticut (CSDE, n.d.), of which 19 received SIG funds. Three of these schools were the subject of CEP case studies and are highlighted in this report.

As part of the state’s ESEA waiver application, Connecticut requested and was granted flexibility to use funds from the 21st CCLC program to expand learning time during the regular school day, in addition to the traditional purpose of supporting programs held before or after school or during weekends and summer. As a result of this change, the CSDE decided to hold two separate competitions for 21st CCLC grants for the 2013-14 school year—one for traditional 21st CCLC programs, and another for ELT programs with the following purpose:

> ... to expand learning time by 300 or more hours through a longer school day, week and/or year for addressing schoolwide priorities for all students. Priorities include rigorous academics, differentiated supports, frequent data analysis, targeted teacher development, engaging enrichment and an enhanced school culture. This delivery model will include schools partnering with community agencies to provide student supports (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2013a, p. 1).

Since federal funding for the 21st CCLC grants in Connecticut did not increase, this split meant that funding that previously went solely to traditional 21st CCLC school enrichment
activities has been reduced to accommodate the 21st CCLC ELT activities. Traditional applicants could apply for grants of up to $200,000, and ELT applicants could apply for up to $150,000. CSDE awarded six traditional grants and five ELT grants of 21st CCLC funds. Each of the schools receiving ELT grants received $142,890, and had to expand learning time by 300 or more hours over the course of the school year.

Connecticut is one of the five states participating in the TIME Collaborative program of the National Center on Time and Learning. NCTL works with state and local leaders—including policy makers, school administrators, union leaders, and others—to “build a better school day and year with more time” and to “use their learning time more effectively.” (See box A.) One of Connecticut’s 9 TIME Collaborative schools is included as a case study in this report.

Box A. The National Center on Time and Learning and the TIME Collaborative

Colorado and Connecticut are two of five states—along with Massachusetts, New York, and Tennessee—participating in the TIME Collaborative program. This initiative is a partnership between the Ford Foundation and the National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL), an organization headquartered in Boston and funded by various charitable foundations. As of August 2014, there were 9 TIME Collaborative schools in Connecticut and 8 in Colorado. Some of these schools are in the implementation stage and others are in the initial planning stage.

Launched in 2012, the primary focus of the TIME Collaborative is to expand learning time and “improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education.” The NCTL works with state and local leaders—including policy makers, school administrators, and union leaders—to “build a better school day and year with more time” and to “use their learning time more effectively” by providing on-site technical assistance, coaching, and resources to schools in helping them redesign their school day.

TIME Collaborative schools must add a minimum of 300 hours to the school year to allow for more teacher collaboration and instructional time. Schools often use strategies such as staggering teacher schedules during the school day or year or partnering with community organizations to provide additional tutoring and services to students. Although participating districts receive a capacity-building grant from the Ford Foundation (awarded by NCTL) to cover the costs of planning, the costs of implementing ELT for Collaborative schools are covered by reallocated funds or a variety of federal, state, or local funding streams. Participants also receive assistance from the NCTL to find other sources of funding to sustain this effort. In Connecticut, the TIME Collaborative is a collaboration between NCTL, Connecticut’s State Department of Education, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Eastern Connecticut Community Foundation, the United Way of Meriden and Wallingford, and COMPASS Youth Collaborative.

In addition, Connecticut implements its own state-level initiatives focused on school improvement, including the Alliance District program, the Priority School District program, and the Commissioner’s Network (see box B for more information on these programs). There is considerable overlap between priority/turnaround schools and these other state programs, so the same school may have access to multiple sources of funding to support ELT. For example, all of the priority/turnaround schools are located within an Alliance
District, and 27 of the 28 priority/turnaround schools are also within a Priority School District. As of January 2014, 5 of the 11 Commissioner's Network schools were also priority/turnaround schools.

**Box B. 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, 2014a). 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, 2013c). As of August of 2014, there were 11 schools participating in the program.

**Connecticut Case Study Districts and Schools**

CEP did case studies of four schools in three Connecticut districts for this report (see Table 1). Bienne, Meylan, and Ebel Schools received SIG funds and are also priority/turnaround schools. Grenchen School did not receive SIG funds, nor is it a priority/turnaround school, but it does participate in the TIME Collaborative and receives 21st CCLC funds. All three districts—Glycine, Movado, and Breitling—have been designated as Alliance Districts by the CSDE. More detailed information about these schools and districts is included in the case study narratives accompanying this report on the CEP website at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
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<td>Mr. Fisher</td>
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<td>9-12</td>
<td>Mr. Wasler; Ms. Vogal</td>
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Note: All district, school, and principal names are pseudonyms.
General Information about ELT Initiatives in Connecticut

Expanded learning time initiatives are essential elements of both federal and state-level school improvement programs in Connecticut. The turnaround/priority schools, 21st CCLC recipients, TIME Collaborative schools, Priority School Districts, and the Commissioner’s Network schools are all required to offer some form of expanded learning time. Alliance School Districts have the option of including an ELT component in their school improvement plans.

State officials said that the focus on and implementation of ELT initiatives has changed over time in the state. Michelle Rosado, who has worked for the Connecticut State Department of Education for more than 20 years, currently manages the federal School Improvement Grants and works on the Commissioner’s Network and Alliance District state-level programs, among other responsibilities. She was also involved in drafting Connecticut’s ESEA waiver application. In 2010, when Rosado first started working with SIG-funded schools implementing the turnaround or transformation models, she and school administrators “weren’t quite as familiar with the federal definition of what extended time meant at that point,” she explained.

Initially, ELT in Connecticut consisted of a patchwork of different strategies. For example, some schools added instructional time by reducing transition time between classes and lunchtime, while other schools added more than an hour of learning time to the day through negotiated teachers’ contracts. This latter, more extensive, approach—which meets the federal definition of ELT by adding time for student learning and/or teacher professional development—has received attention only since the receipt of SIG funds and participation in the TIME Collaborative,” said Rosado. “It’s only been within the last year, year and a half that it’s been on the forefront.” Now, other state-level school improvement initiatives, such as the Commissioner’s Network, are based on SIG and also require ELT, she said.

Iris White, a CSDE official with the turnaround office, said that Connecticut’s participation in the TIME Collaborative has provided the state with a framework to implement ELT in schools. (The turnaround office oversees initiatives focused on improving and supporting low-performing schools and districts, including the Alliance Districts and the Commissioner’s Network schools.) Under the TIME Collaborative, said White, “it’s about redesigning the school day and looking at how you’re allocating time, and then using that time more wisely within the school day.” Nevertheless, she noted, districts and schools must consider financial costs and collective bargaining ramifications when implementing ELT.

The Glycine School District implemented both districtwide and school-specific ELT initiatives over the last few years. In 2010, the district decided to add 30 minutes to the regular school day in all of the district’s schools. 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. The district lengthened the school
day at the same time some of its individual schools had begun to implement or plan their own ELT initiatives. Among these schools were Bienne Elementary, which was in its second year of SIG implementation, and Meylan High, in its first year of a SIG.

During its three years of SIG funding, the Ebel School in the Movado district created longer blocks of instructional time for students by reconfiguring teacher preparation periods throughout the week and reducing transition time and some lunch time for students. At the same time, the school also added an extra hour each day of before-school planning and collaboration time for teachers, a change that the principal said has led to higher-quality, more rigorous classroom instruction. After the three-year SIG ended, Ebel maintained the extra hour of before-school time for teachers to plan and collaborate, but discontinued the longer instruction blocks during the school day for students.

Grenchen Elementary School, with assistance from the Breitling district, has established strong partnerships with external community organizations that have enabled it to extend the school day for grades 3 through 6 from 6½ hours to 8½ hours. School officials reported that staggering teacher schedules and providing both morning and afternoon blocks for interventions, enrichment, and other programs for students, with the assistance of community partners, was a successful marriage that reduced the costs of implementing ELT and gave teachers more time for collaboration, planning, and professional development.

Funding and Resources for ELT in Connecticut

CSDE officials reported that schools and districts have funded their ELT initiatives through a combination of resources. While this includes federal support through SIGs, the Title school improvement set-aside, and 21st CCLC funds, the bulk of funding for ELT in Connecticut comes from state initiatives, including the Alliance Districts, Commissioner’s Network, and Priority Schools programs, and existing local funds.

Although SIG funds may be used for ELT, schools must think about and plan for sustainability of ELT beyond the three-year grants, said Rosado. She gave this example of a school that found a way to continue implementing ELT:

One of our school districts did pay for extending the day by half an hour but they also renegotiated the teacher’s contract to extend the day. Each year they added another 15 minutes so they were able to extend the day by an hour. . . By the time they got to the end of the [SIG] grant it was part of the regular contract.

White noted that some schools are staggering teachers’ schedules as a “way of avoiding having to use additional funding to pay teachers a stipend for extra hours.” Staggered schedules were part of the ELT strategies at a school in the Breitling School District, for example.
In the Glycine district, funding and sustaining ELT and school improvement initiatives are challenges at the district and school levels. Sustainability is a particular concern for the Glycine schools that receive federal SIG funds, which have ended at Bienne Elementary and will soon end at Meylan High School. The Glycine district is actively seeking ways to fund school improvement initiatives, including ELT, that were previously covered by the SIG at Bienne and will no longer be funded by the SIG at Meylan when the grant period ends the end of the 2013-14 school year.

ELT initiatives at the Ebel School in the Movado district focused heavily on common planning time and professional development opportunities for teachers, and included an additional hour every morning before school for these activities. To cover the 10% increase in teachers’ salaries needed to fund this initiative, the principal used local funding from the district’s operational budget, rather than the school’s SIG award. This was intentional, according Principal Grinberg, so that the planning and collaboration period would be sustained beyond the three-year federal SIG grant.

Two case study schools in Glycine and Breitling receive 21st CCLC funds. In Glycine, several schools use these grant funds for afterschool programs. 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 [to support ELT during the regular school day].” 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 in Glycine agreed that it is best not to shift funding from traditional 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 Principal Wasler, and this is really important to his students.

In the Breitling district, Grenchen Elementary applied for and received a 21st CCLC grant with the ELT flexibility. The school is using these funds both to provide programs during extended hours with community partners and to pay some staff members for working extra time, which means they stay in the school for the entire staggered schedule day, according to one district official. The other Breitling schools with 21st CCLC grants continue to use the funds in the traditional way, to expand learning time before or after school or during the summer, “for a targeted group of students, which is a subset of the school as opposed to the entire school,” said the district official.

Through the TIME Collaborative program, the National Center on Time and Learning provides ELT-related professional development, planning, and technical assistance to participating districts and schools. However, the organization does not provide direct
financial assistance to implement ELT initiatives. District and school leaders that we interviewed at the Grenchen School in the Breitling district confirmed that the TIME Collaborative has helped their staff with planning ELT initiatives and identifying funding opportunities.

**Progress with ELT**

Both Connecticut state officials we interviewed emphasized the importance of leadership, collaboration, and communication among the local teachers’ union, school administration, and the community in schools and districts implementing ELT initiatives in their state. They explained that successful schools with ELT opportunities generally have collaborative relationships with their local union representatives. For example, White cited one school in the state that received a grant from the teachers’ union to help support the expansion of the school day.

Glycine district officials worked with the local teachers’ union and schools to implement ELT. As noted earlier, Glycine added an additional 30 minutes to the regular school day in all its schools. This expansion of time was built into the teacher contract through the traditional collective bargaining process and was detailed in a memorandum of understanding between the Glycine school board and the union. 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 expanded the school day as part of a package, a district official explained.

The Glycine district 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 teachers’ union also agreed to increase the number of days dedicated to professional development for teachers across the district under the new contract.

Positive union-school relationships are an important consideration by the TIME Collaborative, said White:

*One of the things that the National Center on Time and Learning looks for when they receive applications is how strong is the collaboration between the union and the administration, because they feel that it’s really important that teachers feel they are a part of the process, and it’s a good collaborative labor management situation. Because if there isn’t, things can really fall apart and it’s just not successful.*

School leaders at Grenchen, a TIME Collaborative school, emphasized the importance of leadership and collaboration among the school staff as well as with the Breitling district central office staff. Principal Leon described the school staff as “very cooperative, collaborative, and hard-working.” The Breitling district central office staff—which Leon called “a member of our team”—has also been very supportive and helpful in planning and
implementing the school’s ELT initiatives, according to Grenchen school officials. The central office staff has directly assisted school officials with organizing community partners, navigating requirements, and securing federal, state, and local funds, while the district human resources department has helped the school understand contractual obligations. “[T]here is no way we could have organized this schedule on top of our other duties,” said Assistant Principal Bentley. “So, we have some really good people doing this. And without them, I don’t think we could make this work, honestly.”

State officials mentioned that some schools are staggering teacher schedules so they can expand learning time for students. Some teachers begin the day early but leave before the end of the regular school day, and vice versa. This allows teachers to maintain the same total number of hours and avoids the need to renegotiate teacher contracts.

District leaders at Breitling and school officials at Grenchen said they work with a wide range of community partners and outside organizations to provide both enrichment and focused interventions to students during the school day. These partnerships have made it possible to stagger the regular teachers’ schedules, so that even with the longer school day for grades 3-6, the teacher work day did not have to be extended. Students in grades 3 and 4 participate in their “specials” (world language or enrichment classes, for example, or music, art, gym, or other non-core subjects) and differentiated support classes in the mornings. Then they do enrichment with community partners in the afternoons. The schedule is reversed for students in grades 5 and 6, who have enrichment in the mornings and differentiated supports and specials in the afternoons. School officials reported that staggering teacher schedules and including both morning and afternoon blocks for interventions, enrichment, and other programs with community partners was a successful approach that reduced the costs of ELT.

Ms. Schneider, a Breitling district official, noted that the enrichment programs run in cooperation with community partners have an added benefit of exposing students to individuals from different professions. For example, she explained, students obtain information beyond what a classroom teacher can provide “when Junior Achievement comes in and teaches the kids about financial things or savings or what the business world does and how to set up a business.” Principal Leon agreed that the range of experiences found among the community partnership instructors is beneficial to students.

Through the community partnerships, the district has been able to offer nontraditional instructional activities that are “really engaging to students and are educationally sound and supportive,” said Schneider. Examples include a local theater that is coupled with the literacy program and a Department of Defense aerodynamics program that is paired with the science curriculum. She described the impact of these programs in this way:

These kids remember [the aerodynamics program] for a long time, and it’s aligned with our science curriculum. It’s aligned with the national standards in science and math. And it supports what they’re learning in the classroom in a way that’s different from the teacher who’s teaching in the classroom… Those
are huge successes.

Grenchen school officials felt it was a little early in the process to determine the impact of ELT on student achievement. However, a few benefits are already apparent, said Ms. Colt, the literacy coach:

[S]ome of the things that are really apparent, though is the ability to have all students receive enrichment, and then to have increased intervention time. I think that’s, without a doubt . . . the most positive thing that’s come out of this for our students . . . Kids are exposed to things that they wouldn’t have had the opportunity to be exposed to before, like robotics.”

Grenchen Assistant Principal Bentley saw a benefit in “the sheer number of kids that are getting interventions that we couldn’t do before.”

Formative assessments show improvements in learning, according to the staff interviewed. They noted that although they can’t say definitively that these improvements are a result of ELT, they do feel the literacy and math interventions in place during the block of time for differentiated interventions have helped.

Even with staggered schedules for teachers, however, it is a longer day for the students. State officials noted that it is important to make sure teachers have adequate professional development and support so that they are equipped to teach in longer blocks of time and help the students maintain their stamina. They cautioned that schools offering ELT must consider and plan for ELT by providing teachers with common planning time and support.

The cornerstone ELT initiative at the Ebel School in the Movado School District is to focus on extra common planning, professional development, and collaboration time for teachers. Since SIG implementation, instruction has become more rigorous in Ebel classrooms, according to Principal Grinberg. He attributes much of this change to the extra time for common teacher planning and professional development. He also credits this improvement in instruction to teachers taking on leadership roles, teaching other teachers, and collaborating on professional development. Grinberg shared the following specific example:

Yesterday . . . we had a second grade teacher who is a vertical team leader for K-3. She came upstairs to show the teachers, the seventh and eighth grade vertical team, how to do backwards planning, looking at the Common Core and how to unwrap [the content in the standards]. So, it’s been such a godsend—it makes my life so much easier because there are so many issues . . . to have everyone else on board and taking these leadership roles. I think that’s the reason why the school is where it is . . . [We have] the extra time for teachers to plan and to look at challenges and try to figure out together, How do we get through these challenges?
Grinberg said that during the first year of SIG implementation, the school met the federal accountability requirements for adequate yearly progress through No Child Left Behind Act’s “safe harbor” provision. (Under safe harbor, a school can make adequate yearly progress even if it does not meet the state targets, as long as the number of students who are not scoring at the proficient level on the state tests is reduced by 10% from the previous year.) From that point forward, Ebel students as a group have met the annual targets for achievement on state assessments.

Grinberg noted that the improvements in test scores are connected to multiple factors, rather than just to more instructional time. He specifically cited teacher collaboration and planning, staff changes at the school under SIG, and overall improvements in school culture as factors that have contributed to these gains. “I don’t think it was just one thing; I think it was multiple things,” he said, including “teachers now being cognizant of how to plan for our kids.”

**Challenges of ELT in Connecticut**

State officials also talked about challenges faced by districts and schools in implementing ELT. Many of these schools, particularly SIG and turnaround/priority schools, are implementing several school improvement initiatives simultaneously. For example, said CDSE official White, one school that has partnered with the TIME Collaborative is also a Commissioner’s Network school, and has received SIG funds. A challenge in coordinating these programs is to determine how the TIME Collaborative work can support what has already been developed and approved in the Commissioner’s Network turnaround plan, and vice versa? She explained the challenge in this way:

> So one of the issues with this work is the schools that have so many different initiatives and different partners who are trying to fix the school. So, how do we make sure there is communication between the different partners and that they are supporting each other and that the staff is not becoming overwhelmed because there is just too much going on at the same time?

Glycine district officials expressed the same sentiment about the difficulty of juggling several reform initiatives simultaneously, even though these programs have the same ultimate goal of improving schools. Similarly, Principal Grinberg at the Ebel School in Movado cited challenges in putting in place numerous changes during the first year of SIG implementation—“it was a lot thrown at [teachers] that first year.” He would advise others who are leading school turnaround or ELT to implement changes more gradually, with ample input from teachers, rather than trying to do everything at once.

State officials also cited challenges in staffing schools and districts implementing ELT and providing professional development for teachers and administrators. Some schools face challenges recruiting the right people and retaining some of the staff, said Rosado, adding that “in some of the schools, they might lose some staff in the beginning who don’t want to work the longer days . . . .” Staffing challenges can also arise when large numbers of teachers
must attend professional development sessions out of the school building. White explained:

*The TIME Collaborative has seven technical assistance sessions and maybe other PD that’s going on. So it’s somewhat overwhelming for the principal to make sure that the different teams are communicating and that there is not so much time where teachers and staff are out of the building and not with their students.*

State officials also said the state has limited capacity to assist districts and schools with ELT and other school improvement initiatives. The CSDE is understaffed, said one state official, and some staff members do not receive sufficient professional development themselves to be able to provide meaningful help to districts and schools.

In Glycine, staff turnover was a challenge in implementing ELT. The district’s fiscal situation constrains its ability to offer competitive pay for school staff, which is particularly troubling, given that Glycine’s students are high-need and therefore would benefit from a well-trained, stable teaching force. Consequently, Glycine often loses teachers to neighboring districts with better pay, said Principal Fischer at Bienne, who described Glycine as a “high demand, low-pay district.” Principals Walser and Vogel at Meylan High echoed these sentiments about teacher retention and general turnover. With its SIG funds, Meylan expanded the school day by 30 minutes and switched from a two-semester to a three-semester school year. When the redesign process began, said Walser, “not everyone wanted to support it . . . I have probably hired, in the past four years, 40 teachers” (out of the roughly 70 teachers employed throughout the school year). Teacher turnover also creates challenges with specific aspects of school improvement initiatives, such as forming 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—teachers go on to other districts.*

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

Turnover was not mentioned as a challenge by interviewees at Ebel in the Movado district or in the Breitling district. This may be, in part, due to district locale. Glycine is in a town, distant from the large urban core. The Ebel School is located in a city with a large pool of teacher applicants. Principal Grinberg said this factor was particularly helpful when the school replaced half of its staff under the SIG turnaround model. In the following school year, Ebel was able to retain all of the new teachers hired at the beginning of the grant in the previous school year. Grinberg attributed this retention to the school’s focus on teacher collaboration, professional development and support, and leadership roles, which give
teachers a voice. Grenchen in the Breitling district is also located in a small city, and none of the district’s schools have been identified by the state as turnaround/priority schools or SIG schools.

For Grenchen school leaders, the biggest challenge of ELT has been implementing the new schedule and programs. Particular challenges range from coordinating transportation and communicating schedule changes with school staff and parents, to planning meaningful activities that are aligned with the schools’ overall mission and goals. Both district and school officials also reported challenges in collaborating with community partners. It is time consuming for district- and school-level staff to determine appropriate activities and find people to help with enrichment, intervention, and support programs at the school. Once partnerships are formed, it is also time-consuming for district and school staff to manage the programs, and is challenging for coaches, instructional leaders, and school principals to juggle the responsibilities of managing ELT alongside their traditional responsibilities.

Finally, state officials cited challenges with funding ELT across districts and schools. Case study participants also said that funding and sustainability for ELT initiatives is challenging. Sustainability is a particular concern for the Glycine schools with SIG funds, which have ended at Bienne Elementary and will end soon at Meylan High School. Some elements of the ELT initiatives in Glycine have been maintained through support from other local and state funding sources but district officials report that system-wide financial constraints in their schools are difficult to overcome.

**State and Local Perceptions of ELT in Connecticut**

State officials were generally positive about the potential of ELT initiatives to improve the academic achievement of students in Connecticut schools, although CSDE official White noted that it might be too soon to really understand the impact. “I don’t think at this time we really know if it is working,” she said. She further explained that ELT may be most effective for certain students:

> [W]e want to support all students, but I think it’s also very important that additional time is used to help engage and assist students with special needs, ELL students, African American students—we want to make sure that this is helping to close the achievement gap in our state.

CDSE official Rosado agreed that ELT had the potential to be an effective school improvement strategy. “I think it can be if it’s done well.” She cautioned that schools, districts, and states considering ELT strategies should try to learn from others that have been implementing these sorts of initiatives for a few years—for example, schools in Massachusetts. Rosado added:

> I think there [are] a lot of things that you have to consider before you jump right in... making sure that teachers have professional development to support them because it’s
harder to teach in a longer block. And you need to make sure you have support because just having more time doesn’t mean that it’s going to be effective.

In Glycine, district officials viewed ELT as 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 now 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 said 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 in this group moved from the proficient to the advanced achievement level on the state assessment.

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.

In Breitling, both district and school officials viewed ELT as a worthwhile initiative for school improvement if it is done thoughtfully. District official Schneider explained:

It is [worthwhile] if you do appropriate things with [the time] . . . I think that you have to be very careful about that in terms of listening to your constituency and weighing what’s the tradeoff. I don’t think an extended day for the sake of keeping kids in school longer to do more of the same thing is going to—in and of itself—improve everything. But that said, some of our children don’t come from print-rich environments. They don’t come from situations where people have the means to take them to cultural things and enroll them in additional activities, and to have that option at a school is worthwhile . . . [A] six and a half hour day is insufficient to start with, but to give kids just a longer day with the same stuff in it isn’t enough.

Schneider also said that policymakers and the public should look beyond the classroom
teacher to other members of the community to provide interventions and enrichment for students. Although the school buildings are open for such uses, the funding may need to come from sources other than school and district budgets. “We’ve got to look at expanding the model if we’re going to really provide this vision that people have about what it would look like to give kids all of these opportunities,” she said.

School officials at Grenchen in Breitling said that ELT has been beneficial and that they plan to expand and improve their programs. They cautioned, however, that ELT must be done in a thoughtful and purposeful way, with ample focus on leadership and collaboration and with the right people who are dedicated to the process. Principal Leon emphasized this point:

> You can’t decide today that we’re going to just add 300 hours and just say, okay, this is our school day. You’ve got to plan. You have to make sure that you have the proper supports in place. And realistically, you have to be fully prepared. This doesn’t happen over a year. You go through the training then you actually have to do the work.

The Ebel School in Movado concentrated its efforts on providing more time for teachers to meet, collaborate, mentor one another, and develop plans. Principal Grinberg asserted that this was the most effective approach to improvement at his school:

> [T]eachers needed time to get together and collaborate and mentor each other and create action plans together and plan together. For me, I think that [providing time for teachers to meet] is the best thing that we have done when we got the SIG grant.

Grinberg was less confident about the impact of ELT on students. While he acknowledged the importance of additional time for interventions and enrichment activities for students, he cautioned that extra time should not be spent on more of the same thing. “[O]ur kids do need time to practice what they’re learning the in the classroom … and enrichment programs … but I would make sure I plan it so that it’s different than the school day,” he said.
References


