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**TIME FOR LEARNING: UNDERSTANDING
STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES TOWARD LEARNING
IN EXPANDED LEARNING TIME REFORM**

BY

KRIS A. MONAHAN

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
EDUCATION**

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

AND

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2012

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2012

ABSTRACT

Learning takes time, but providing time does not in itself ensure that learning will take place (Carroll, 1963; Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974; Anderson, 1981; Aronson, Zimmer & Carlos, 1999; Berliner, 1990; Kidder et. al., 1975). We need to examine more closely how students are using time and which conditions maximize student engagement. As schools continue to struggle with meeting state and national standards using traditional educational pedagogies and structures, whole school reforms are often implemented to improve student learning and success. While several studies have attempted to begin this exploration, few, if any, actually ask students about their experiences, perspectives, and attitudes in reformed schools. Yet, student voice is increasingly identified as an essential component of school reform by implementation researchers, constructivists, and critical theorists. This study explores 8th graders' perspectives toward learning in a school which implemented Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Reform, adding 30% more time to the school day, compared with a comparison group of 8th graders in the same school district with a traditional school day. A dominant sequential, or exploratory mixed methods approach, using principal interviews (N=2), student focus groups (N=4), and *Time for Learning* student survey (N=226), based primarily on scales from the *School Success Profile* (SSP) (Bowen & Richman, 2008) were utilized to explore students' perspectives on time and learning. Results from the focus groups indicate that students in both schools reported teacher support and peer to peer collaboration opportunities are important. Focus group results also indicate that students in both schools report students' opinions and perspectives are not valued. Students in the ELT school reported more

academic relevancy or real world application of the curriculum. Students report wanting more activities and electives which take time, but do not actually want to be in school longer. Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) results confirmed that students in the ELT school had significantly different perspectives than students in the comparison school. Specifically, students in the ELT school scored significantly higher on the Student Engagement scale of the SSP than students in the comparison school.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Where does the time go? We all ask ourselves this question, but teachers and school administrators are asking it more often since the inception of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In Massachusetts and several other states, schools are forced to squeeze an expanded curriculum into just 180 six-hour days, leaving little time for teachers to help students explore, experience, and master concepts. Most schools still follow a traditional school calendar: school meets from September to June, and a long summer break follows. This model was developed for the agrarian society of the past, freeing up children to work on the farm during the busy harvest season. Our society has changed, yet most schools still remain rooted in a traditional schedule. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) issued a report which began:

Learning in America is a prisoner of time. For the past 150 years, American public schools have held time constant and let learning vary. The rule, only rarely voiced, is simple: Learn what you can in the time we make available...The boundaries of student growth are defined by schedules for bells, buses, and vacations instead of standards and student learning (p. 1).

A common assumption in American culture when it comes to time and education is “more is better.” If this assumption is correct, a longer school day or school year should result in more learning. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is implementing an initiative in many schools which explores the “more is better”

assumption. Several schools are implementing an initiative called Expanded Learning Time (ELT) to expand the school day by thirty percent. However, the relationship between time and learning is much more complex than merely “more is better.” Understanding what happens during the implementation of ELT is critical.

We must understand more than test performance when studying the effectiveness of school reform initiatives. Educational policy research and outcomes-oriented assessments often solely examine student outcomes through standardized test scores. Less often are students’ voices and perspectives the primary source of data in this type of investigation. Student voice is the individual and collective perspective and actions of young people within the context of learning and education (Fletcher, n.d.). Student voice is increasingly identified as an essential component of school reform, yet it is often absent from most investigations focused on school reform efforts. Many advocate for the inclusion of students in the reform process, identifying student voice as a vital element of student engagement in organizational change (Newmann, 1993). Another important reason for listening to students’ perspectives is that students who believe they are heard often feel more engaged and connected to the school. Research in higher education supports the notion that academic success is positively related to student engagement and connectedness.

Policy implementation is recognized as a highly contingent and situated process, yet students’ perspectives have been largely ignored (Honig, 2006). It is important to delve deeper by understanding what students actually think and experience in relation to time and learning.

Time and learning is a much debated topic in education. Much of the discussion on time and learning uses the terms time on task, time on target and Academic Learning Time (ALT) interchangeably. This study will focus on Academic Learning Time as the part of students' school day where students are engaged, motivated and using internal thinking strategies to meet learning objectives. While most believe that "more time is better," there is a much more complex relationship between time and learning. Quality may be more important than quantity when examining the relationship of time and learning. We need to examine more closely how students are using time and which conditions maximize student engagement. While several studies have attempted to begin this exploration, few, if any, actually ask students about their experiences, perspectives, and attitudes. Yet, student voice is increasingly identified as an essential component of school reform by implementation researchers, constructivists, and critical theorists. Cornett and Blumm (1993) assert that school systems should "think first about students" before implementing education reform. Schumacker and Brookside (1992) report that a number of school superintendents selected "student attitude information" as one of the two quality indicators for successful schools.

Massachusetts is investing millions of dollars to implement school-developed models of expanded learning time as a means to increase student achievement. Many other states are looking to the Massachusetts roll-out of expanded learning time as a possible model for expansion. There are extraordinary financial implications (\$1,500-\$2,000 per student) to conduct a reform of this nature. Since the reform is fairly new, little has been published on the expanded learning time initiative. Massachusetts's

evaluative efforts focus on large scale quantitative change and test score improvements. This study seeks a much narrower and deeper understanding from a neglected perspective-the students. And, through the students' perspectives the study will shed light on the types of educational supports, experiences, and practices that best engage students.

This study does not intend to find a universal truth about expanded learning time or student engagement; rather it explores the implementation of a whole-school reform in a specific context, providing a detailed, rich description of the people, policies and setting and describes how these things contribute to the policy implementation. McLaughlin (1991, 2001) emphasizes that future education policy implementation should delve deeper into the complexity of individual cases of implementation without looking for prescriptions or to light a direct path.

This study explores students' experiences, perceptions and attitudes in Massachusetts' Expanded Learning Time Initiative by examining the following primary research questions: What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School? What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time? How do these experiences and attitudes toward learning compare to students in a non-ELT school? Sub-questions to be explored include: What are principals' beliefs related to time and learning? Are the principals' beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students' reported experiences?

Other districts which read this study might ask: what conditions within my own district or school might yield positive implementation results for my particular

students?; Or what are the best conditions to effectively utilize academic learning time in my school?; Or what type of activities and what types of conditions will best engage my students? There appears to be important and complex relationships between time and learning, student engagement, and gaining students' perspectives in school reform which needs to be explored more fully. Such a study fills a distinct gap in the research literature and will help other school districts take away and apply the lessons learned to their own schools.

In Chapter 2, the literature on time and learning, the importance of listening to student voice in school reform, and student engagement are discussed. Background information on the Expanded Learning Time Reform and what lies behind the reform is also presented. In Chapter 3, the rationale and description of the methodology used is described. In Chapter 4, the qualitative and quantitative findings from ELT School, and the comparison school are presented. And, in Chapter 5, a conclusion that integrates the qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions including implications for future study and for broader impact is discussed.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on the relationship of time and learning spans the course of three decades. However, the relationship is not direct and the results of studies vary depending on a number of factors. Learning takes time, but providing time does not in itself ensure that learning will take place (Carroll, 1963; Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974; Anderson, 1981; Aronson, Zimmer & Carlos, 1999; Berliner, 1990; Kidder et. al., 1975)

There are various nested levels of time (See Figure 1). The three types of time investigated in various studies of time are allocated time, engaged time, and academic learning time. Allocated time is the total number of days or hours students are required to spend in school. Engaged time is that part of a day when students are participating in learning activities. Academic Learning Time (ALT) is that part of engaged time when students are actually learning.

Any discussion of time and learning should begin with an overview of Carroll's (1963) model of school learning. His major premise is that school learning is a function of time spent divided by time needed. Carroll outlines that opportunity to learn, or the time the teacher allocates to the topic, is obviously an important component. However, time allocated by the teacher needs to be considered in combination with the student's perseverance.

FIGURE 1 : Nested Levels of Time

Allocated Time

Citing Carroll's model of learning as the theoretical base, many argue that increases in allocated time are directly related to student achievement (Wiley and Harnishfeger, 1974; Gettinger, 1985). The magnitude of Wiley and Harnishfeger's and Gettinger's results have subsequently been questioned due to the small and unrepresentative samples and lack of power analysis. For example, similar analyses have not revealed dramatic effects. Studies conducted by Karweit (1976) and Frederick and Walberg (1980) support only a modest relation between total time allocated (in terms of days of instruction, hours of classes, or minutes of study) and overall achievement. Yet, studies which examine the impact of extending the school year, as well as studies which explore the impact of full day vs. half-day kindergarten,

help support the notion that significant allocated time in school is beneficial to young children (Worthen and Zsiray, 1994; Hough and Bryde (1996) Frazier and Morrison, 1998, Plucker, 2004). Several studies conclude that year-round education improves education and academic achievement, improves attendance and improves attitudes toward school (Worthen and Zsiray, 1994; Hough and Bryde (1996) Frazier and Morrison, 1998, Plucker, 2004). While the results are particularly promising for extended learning proponents, we must keep in mind these studies were conducted with kindergartners. The results cannot and should not be generalized outside of early childhood education.

Often the matter of allocated, instructional time on academic achievement is placed in a global perspective. Since the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) reports in the 1990s, we have heard continuously that the American educational system is not fairing as well on standardized achievement tests as those of other countries. Direct national comparisons are difficult for a number of reasons, as outlined in Berliner and Biddle's *A Manufactured Crisis* (1995). However, recent cross-national studies of time and learning demonstrate interesting results.

Baker (2004) looked at whether there is any correlation between academic achievement, particularly mathematics, and instructional time on a cross-national level. The correlation between yearly instructional hours for all subjects and yearly instructional hours in mathematics was weak ($r=.081$ for ninth grade and $r=.026$ for tenth grade), meaning that more hours in school did not mean more hours spent on mathematics. The author states that there was no significant relationship between achievement and the amount of instructional time. In addition, Baker tested whether

more hours or days of instruction translated into increased achievement within nations. Only developing countries presented a positive association between instructional time and achievement. The authors suggested that each hour of the school across the world looks so different that it seems impossible to accurately compare countries' performance based upon instructional time. As described in Carroll's model, time alone does not ensure learning will take place. Students must also receive plenty of high quality instruction and be motivated to learn.

Engaged Time/Time on Task

Early studies which examined the amount of instructional time in relation to student learning were primarily large, quantitative studies. It wasn't until the early 1970s that researchers attempted to look beyond mere quantity of time by examining student engagement in relation to time. Engaged time is a subset of allocated time. It is the portion of allocated time where students are engaged in learning activities and is often referred to as "Time on Task." (Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974).

Karweit and Slavin (1981) gathered information on four different measures of learning time: (1) total scheduled time, (2) total instructional time, (3) total engaged time, and (4) engaged rate (engaged time/instructional time). They found variation among students in all four measures of time. Scheduled time was larger than instructional time primarily because of interruptions in the class. The differential between engaged minutes and scheduled time was even larger. Karweit and Slavin then attempted to analyze the degree to which engaged time correlated to achievement test results. They estimated that to increase an achievement score from 3.4 to 3.8 on a 4.0 scale would require increases of 13 minutes of learning time. However, because

students only engaged between 50-75% of allocated time, you would need to add an additional 26 minutes of time. Therefore, they argued that spending more time on task would be more effective than only focusing on allocated time.

The time on task studies, such as Karweit and Slavin's study, support the notion that maximizing efficient use of time may be an appropriate reform strategy. A more recent study conducted by Roth et al. (2003) used the Panel Study of Income Dynamics sample of U.S. individuals and families from a broad range of economic and demographic background to demonstrate that engaged time is substantially less than instructional time. This study explores how time is used through the sole reliance on teachers' diaries. They found that students attending school for the longest day were significantly more likely to be white and have fewer special needs. Although students with the longest day spent a smaller percentage of their day on academic subjects, they still spent more time learning academic subjects. Teachers of African-American students reported spending more time on academic subjects and less time on enrichment and recess activities than teachers of white students. The same pattern emerged for teachers of less socio-economically advantaged students. Variations by classroom characteristics show that as the number of students in a class increased, so did the percentage of the school day and amount of time devoted to academics, while the time devoted to enrichment and recess activities decreased. Roth et al. shows that although the length of the school day is fairly uniform across the country, there is a widespread inequity with how the time is used.

No studies of the size of the Panel Study have been conducted at the middle school or high school levels. Caldwell, Huitt, and Graeber (1982) collected data on

time variables from a variety of sources to develop an average of various units of time spent in the various levels of use. Amazingly, of an average 5 hours of allocated time per day, the average student only spends 99 minutes in engaged time and less than one hour per day in focused academic learning time. Some have used these time inventory studies to call the efficiency of education into question arguing that there is most likely enough time in a school day; however more of the time should be spent keeping students on task.

While most studies on extended instructional days are done at the elementary level, the majority of research on the effectiveness of longer classes and scheduling changes has been done at the middle and high school level. There appears to be some support that more efficient uses of time, block scheduling, particularly in mathematics has positive achievement effects on students in middle and high schools (Deuel, 1999; Lewis et.al, 2005; Mattox, Hancock and Queen, 2005).

Academic Learning Time/Time on Target

As the time-on-task researchers began investigating the amount of time students were actually engaged, some researchers began looking a step further by examining the quality of the engagement. Interactive activities and seatwork were often both measured as time on task or engaged time. However, Quartarola (1984) found that unmonitored seatwork is unrelated to achievement. Engaged and interactive student activities such as the use of immediate feedback and correctives in the classroom, focused questions, praise and enforcement and discussion are more beneficial uses of student and teacher time (Borg, 1990; Seifert and Beck 1984; Strother, 1984).

Researchers in the early 1980s began to recognize that it is not enough to be merely engaged in a task, the quality of the engagement is important.

Academic Learning Time (ALT) has been defined as "the amount of time students are successfully covering content that will be tested" (Squires, Huitt & Segars, 1983). ALT is a combination of three separate variables: content overlap, involvement and success. Content overlap is "the percentage of the content covered on the test actually covered by students in the classroom" (Brady, et al., 1977) and is sometimes referred to as "Time on Target." Success is defined as the "extent to which students accurately complete the assignments they have been given" (Fisher, et al., 1978). A high level of Academic Learning Time means that (1) students are covering important content; (2) students are on-task most of the class period; and (3) students are successful on most of the assignments they complete. Because Academic Learning Time is a complex issue, it is often defined and measured differently in studies. What is consistent across studies is students achieve more in classes where they spend most of their time being motivated by high quality teachers rather than working on their own or not working at all (Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Stallings, 1975).

Peterson and Swing (1982) developed the concepts of time on target further, becoming some of the earliest ALT researchers. They studied 72 5th and 6th grade students of mixed ability levels, observing and interviewing during and after a lesson on probability. As predicted by earlier models, students who spent more time on target performed better on achievement tests. However, cognitive processes and motivational thinking were much better indicators of achievement. The concept of time on target was now extended to include the internal thinking strategies and

motivation of individual learners. Swing, Stoiber and Peterson (1988) later found that it is not always accurate to believe that students who seriously engaged in a task are using that time as efficiently as possible. They questioned if time-on-task was really enough.

Swing, Stoiber and Peterson (1988) further found interesting results in a study which examined the impact of teacher professional development, academic learning time and 4th grade students' achievement in vocabulary and mathematics tests. Results seemed to indicate that increasing Academic Learning Time enhanced mathematics problem solving at the individual and class levels.

A Move Toward More Qualitative Approaches in Studying Time and Learning

Ratio-level data is often seen as very desirable by educational researchers interested in making generalizations. Time is an attractive variable because it is a construct which is clear to measure. This may explain why much of the early literature on time and learning looks at time simplistically. Most of the early studies look only at the quantity of time. There is no surprise that many studies were simply inventories or large scale quantitative studies examining the number of minutes or hours allocated to student achievement. However, many researchers began asking deeper questions such as, "What makes for effective use of time?" and, "When are students most fully engaged in learning?" These types of questions led to more qualitative approaches to understanding time and learning.

Perhaps, the most well-known case study related to time and learning was *The Uses of Time for Teaching and Learning*, a three year study of fourteen cases across the US examining the quantity and quality of time in school (U.S. Department of

Education, 1996). The case studies provided rich detail about the various levels and uses of time. The selected case sites were non-traditional and the schools reconfigured time to maximize learning in a way that made best sense for their school. Some extended the school day or year; others added optional out-of-school time activities, while one even decreased classroom instruction time. The study concluded, among other things, that simply adding more classroom time to the school day or year is a weak reform strategy. A case school in New Orleans that expanded the school year to a Japanese style 220 day was not successful. Student achievement did not increase and teachers did not speak favorably of the program. The report outlined the lack of planning time for the implementation as a major cause of its defeat.

On the other hand, another case school in Boston added 36 more days and saw dramatic improvements to student achievement. The Boston school had clear and mutually understood goals among the faculty and administration which may have contributed to the success. Providing enrichment activities just before and just after school in the study sites provided students with structure, empathetic lessons about personal responsibilities, and respect for others. Overall, the study suggests schools need to determine how to configure their days in a meaningful way. While the case study data cannot be generalized, in the traditional sense, it does give rich detail and provide information administrators and teachers should examine before implementing any reform. A more rigorous qualitative, methodological approach may help give more detail and shed more understanding into student motivation.

Why Focus on Students' Perspectives?

Jonathan Kozol (1991) commented in the introduction to *Savage Inequalities* that “the voices of children...have been missing from the whole discussion” of education. As education has moved toward a more progressive and constructivist paradigm, the recognition of the learner as one who has the power to construct meaning has continued to be emphasized, yet the research methods employed to study education often ignore the student. In the last twenty years there has been a call to authorize students’ perspectives and to “reconfigure power dynamics and discourse practices within existing realms of conversation about education” (Cook-Sather, 2002, p.3). If researchers continue to exclude, or only superficially address, student voice when examining the effects of education, reform efforts will be based on representations from the dominant perspective, thereby marginalizing those who walk the halls of the school every day.

A student's perspective is shaped by social and cultural factors (Delpit, 1988). For this study, by perspective I mean the view, or impression formed by the students about 1) the reform implementation and value; 2) relationships with teachers and school administrators, and; 3) the effectiveness of how time is used in the school day. Student voice is defined as the individual and collective perspective and actions of youth within the context of learning and education (Fletcher, n.d.).

Early 20th century thinking and the behaviorists such as Skinner (1969) saw the teacher as a skilled engineer. There was a prescribed way of approaching education, a formula if you will, of what needed to be inputted to create a desired output. Other progressive educators such as Dewey argued that children were more than empty

vessels. Dewey (1964) rejected the idea that children are tabula rasa, blank slates, and called for child-centered education. The basis of child-centered education is that we must start “where the learner is” by designing experiences where students build and construct their own knowledge (Bruner, 1977, p xi). Constructivist approaches to pedagogy give students “the opportunity to explore their ideas and make sense of them”. (Duckworth, 2006). Constructivists believe that teachers can improve their practice by listening closely to what students say about their learning.

Beresford (1999) postulates in order to address the needs of the learner, we must first understand the learner’s view. In the 1990’s, a growing body of literature began to develop on students’ view on education. (Andersson 1996, Beresford, 1999, Blum 1997, Centre for Successful Schools 1990, Cooper and Fielding 1998, Davies and Ellison 1995, Levin 1995, Maden and Rudduck 1997, Osborn 1997, Restructuring Collaborative 1997, Rudduck et al. 1996, Smees and Thomas 1998, Wallace and Wildy 1996). The studies have demonstrated that capturing student voice is important, although too often not done. Since school reform is undertaken on behalf of students, it seems obvious that students should be an important focus when examining school reform. Yet, there are many books and articles focusing on school reform in the new millennium that are silent on the views of students.

Some might argue that student views are often not collected or valued because students are low in power and status. Critical theorists believe there is an unequal stratification in society based upon class, race and gender. Those of high status and high power in society control, either directly or indirectly, those of lower status and power. Freire, who most consider the father of critical pedagogy wrote in the

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) , “Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence;... to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects”. Freire would argue that students should be more than objects or benevolent beneficiaries of education. Critical theory supports giving power to students by emphasizing students’ needs, values, and individuality. Critical theory seeks to engage students to become full participatory members of a society. Freire (1970) would encourage educational leaders to avoid imposing decisions on students without engaging students.

There are more recent researchers who have portrayed students as articulate, sophisticated observers of school life. Nieto (1994) found that even students who were on the margins of engagement with school are able to articulate events, circumstances and interaction which contributed to their construction of school as an unpleasant place. Poplin and Weeres (1992), in *Voices from the Inside*, a report of their study of California schools further describe how essential engaging students in the conversation around their school experiences when they state “ For it is in coming to know that we came to want to act. It is in the listening that we are changed. It is in the hearing our own students speak, as if for the first time, that we came to believe.” (p. 19).

In 1997, Wasley, Hampel and Clark published *Kids and School Reform*, which highlighted students from five schools associated with Coalition of Essential Schools, a network of schools stemming from ideas developed by TheodoreSizer (1984). The underlying questions for their book are: When adults make far-reaching changes in schools, what differences ensue for their students? When do new instructional

methods truly improve student learning? And, when do these changes yield little or nothing for kids? The authors did a series of observations, interviews of students, parents, and adults in schools over the course of three years. When examining the school reform, they listened to the students and saw little result of the reform on the students.

Wilson and Corbett's *Listening to Urban Kids* (2001), has a simple premise: If substantial reforms to improve what and how students learn actually occur in schools, then students' descriptions of their classroom experiences should reflect those changes. Reform in other words, should be noticeable by what students say about school (p.1). Regardless of the students' understanding of the specifics of the reform or the adult language used to describe it, what students say they do, say their teachers do, and say happens in school should be reflective of the implemented reform. The authors operated on the assumption that if "something" was going on, they would hear it from the students. Like Wasley, Hampel and Clark (1997), the authors concluded that listening to students was an important part of planning, implementing, and adjusting school reform.

There has to be a place in school reform for students as participants and not just beneficiaries. Fullan (1991) makes distinctions between students as "beneficiaries" and "participants". Fullan indicates "When adults do think of students, they think of them as the potential beneficiaries of change....They rarely think of students as participants in a process of change and organizational life." If educators believe that students are participants, then they must find ways of directly involving students in implementation of reform and in helping understand the impacts of organizational

change and reform. Fullan challenges the reader: “What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in school?”(p. 170).

A concern from teachers and administrators when researchers exam students’ perspectives is that students’ views may be complaints and gripes which could lead to public criticism of the adults (teachers and administrators). Flutter (2006) dismisses several concerns of involving students in obtaining students’ views in the involvement of reformed learning environments. “Time, costs and other practical matters have often been cited as obstacles for student participation, but these are not insurmountable difficulties and, as we have seen, the potential benefit for students, schools and society should outweigh their constraints.” (p.191). Beyond the logistical difficulties, perhaps the fear of what students might say is the major reason why many adults just don’t ask. It is true that students only see a small piece of the reform picture. However, their small piece is important. Wilson & Corbett (2001) also concede that the students do not have all the answers. However, educators must ask students what they want and need. Asking these questions in every context is important since student answers are contextually specific. Noguera (2006) argues that adults have to be willing to hear what the students actually think and respect them enough to learn and listen. They don’t need to know everything that is happening district wise, state-wide or even school wide, but what they do notice and can articulate about their experiences is important. And, it is the adult’s role to take their ideas and translate them into effective practice, thereby rebalancing the power dynamic of adults and students in schools.

Noguera (2006) contends that in schools where decision making is done in a top-down fashion without teacher and student input, change is unlikely to remain. Lasting change can only occur if stakeholders are engaged. Further, education needs to engage in discourse from all stakeholders to redistribute power to students. Heilbrun (1988) contends, “Power is the ability to take one’s place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one’s part matter.”

The concept, language, and structures of education are primarily based on adults’ ideas about the conceptualization and practice of education. Adults develop, tear-down, and then reform education, often without considering students’ perspectives. Do adults know more about education than students? Allison Cook-Sather (2002) contends “It is time that we count students among those with authority to participate both in the critique and in the reform of education”(pg.3).

Student Engagement

In the last decade, much has been written in higher education to support the case that students matter in education and that student engagement is linked to student success. Pascarella and Terezini (2005) conclude after reviewing thousands of studies related to student development that “If, as it appears, individual effort or engagement is the critical determinant of the impact of college, then it is important to focus on the ways in which an institution can shape its academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement” (p.602). Student engagement ,says Kuh (2001), who many refer to as the most prolific scholar in student engagement in higher education, involves both what the students put into learning and the resources and opportunities and learning contexts that an institution shapes. The National Survey of

Student Engagement (NSSE) was developed to systematically assess the degree to which college students participate in effective educational practices (Kuh, 2001, 2003) and focuses around five clusters: 1) academic challenge; 2) active and collaborative learning; 3) student-faculty interaction; 4) enriching educational experiences; and, 5) supportive campus environments. Using NSSE data, Belcheir (2003) found that working on projects that require integration of ideas from a variety of sources, asking questions in class, and discussing ideas from class outside of class were activities which students reported had a positive impact on learning. The movement and discussion of the importance of student engagement for college students has been a catalyst for discussions at the secondary level.

Surprisingly, while discussions have commenced and a High School Survey of Student Engagement was developed in 2008, little is written about school engagement at the secondary level, with seemingly nothing at the middle school level. A clear and consistent definition does not appear to exist in the literature. Student engagement is a complex construct comprised of multiple dimensions and characterized by the student's relationship to school and the people and policies within it. While the literature is sparse in secondary education, what seems to be clear is that students and student engagement matter.

While the definition and measurement of student engagement seems to vary tremendously, Kearsley and Shneiderman's engagement theory does provide a specific framework for teaching and learning based upon the fundamental idea that "students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks" (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999). Engagement theory suggests

that engaged learning occurs when learning activities 1) take place in a group context, 2) are project-based, and 3) have an outside focus. Engagement is a dynamic process and activity, not a static event. Extending engagement theory to this study, students should be participating in activities which are engaging and where opportunities for group work, peer-to-peer learning, and real-life applications exist to make best use of academic-learning time. In addition to engaging learning opportunities, students must have a learning environment which promotes and values students' perspectives, as students report feeling more connected and engaged with school when their opinions are valued.

Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Background Information

The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative began in 2005, when 16 school districts received planning grants from the Massachusetts Department of Education to consider adding time to and redesigning their school day. The process to obtain the planning grants included a multi-step process to secure approval and funding from the Department of Education for their redesign plan. The steps as outlined by Mass 2020 (2011) include:

- A school district applies for an ELT planning grant, which will allow them to explore whether or not expanding the school day and/or year is a viable option in one or more of its schools.
- If a district receives a planning grant, the district convenes a planning team made up of administrators, teachers, union representatives, school partners, and parents to develop an ELT implementation proposal detailing how the

participating schools would expand time and how their educational program would be redesigned to take advantage of the additional time.

- If the district decides expanding the day and/or year is the right option for its school and community, the district submits its completed implementation proposal to the ESE for consideration.
- If ESE approves the implementation plan and the district and the teachers union negotiate an agreement pertaining to the expanded schedule, then the district is eligible for \$1,300 per pupil in state funding for implementation of the plan.

In 2006, the Massachusetts Legislature appropriated \$6.5 million or \$1,300 per student for the ELT Initiative, enabling the first 10 schools across five districts to open in September 2006 with a new expanded day. These 10 schools expanded the school day by 30% and became the first public schools in the nation to be funded by a statewide initiative created specifically for the purpose of expanding time to improve student achievement. Most of these schools added at least two hours to the school day.

The original ELT funding also allowed an additional 29 districts to participate in a comprehensive planning process to consider implementing ELT in either the 2007 or 2008 school year. In 2007, ELT experienced further significant growth when the Legislature doubled funding to \$13 million. This increase allowed nine additional expanded learning schools in seven districts.

ELT schools were given the task to completely redesign their school day from the ground up, adding time for core academics, enrichment courses, and teacher

planning and professional development. The ELT Initiative is based on the following principles:

- *300 Additional Hours of Learning for Every Student:* Each participating school adds 300 hours over the course of the school year. This time can be added in the form of longer school days or additional days in the school year, but every student must participate. The added time creates a new school day and/or year for every child.
- *More Time Requires a Complete School Redesign:* Each participating school committed to a complete redesign of its educational program tied to student needs, student goals, and a clear, school-wide academic focus.
- *Academics, Enrichment, and Improving Instruction:* Additional time must be aimed at improving academic outcomes and broadening opportunities in three key areas: (1) core academics; (2) enrichment opportunities, and (3) teacher planning and professional development.
- *Competition for State Funding:* Participating districts and a subset of their schools must have completed a rigorous planning process, developed high-quality ELT proposals, and be able to prove that they have the capacity for successful implementation.
- *Flexible and Innovative:* Participating schools and districts have the flexibility to create their own redesign approach, including goals, staffing plans, labor agreements, compensation, and schedules.
- *Inclusive Planning and Preparation Leads to Successful Implementation:* Participating schools and districts must include a wide range of

stakeholders, especially teachers and parents, in the comprehensive planning and redesign process.

- *Partners Bring Important New Resources:* Partnerships are an essential component of all ELT schools. They contribute invaluable expertise and resources that schools don't have when working alone. Partners include universities, community-based organizations, health centers, businesses, artists, and many others.
- *State Support and Funding:* State support and funding is required to expand the school day or year. Currently, ELT schools receive \$1,300 per pupil for every student to implement their expanded learning time plan. (Mass 2020, 2011)

As of fall of 2011, there are 19 schools in 10 school districts across Massachusetts participating in the ELT reform initiative.

What Lies behind the Expanded Learning Time Reform Strategy?

Special interest groups like Mass 2020, a private interest group comprised of some very influential current and former policy makers in Massachusetts and Center for American Progress began a steady movement resulting in a groundswell of support for expanding time in schools to address chronic underperformance. The reform seems grounded in the movement of developing a skilled workforce for the 21st century and to respond to the call for American competitiveness as set out by the federal government. Massachusetts in the few years preceding its Expanded Learning Time Initiative had a similar groundswell on math and science education and was seeking ways to grow the Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Pipeline. In

fear of losing biotechnology dollars to other states and in an effort to strengthen the workforce, Massachusetts began aggressively pumping money into economic stimulus legislation which aimed to improve PK-16 education and “home grow” a STEM pipeline. The Expanded Learning Time Initiative was one such resulting solution in Massachusetts. It was designed to help turn around underperforming schools and respond to the complaints of teachers and administrators that there wasn’t enough time to squeeze an expanded curriculum and prepare students for the high stakes testing known as Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), which developed under standards reform movement.

The goals of time and learning reforms, like the Massachusetts ELT initiative, are to improve academics, broaden opportunities, and enhance instruction. More time on target means more time for differentiated instruction and project-based learning. Differentiated instruction and project based learning presumably will reach students who are at the margins in school. ELT is also designed to broaden opportunities. Since the standards based movement, teachers and administrators needed to focus on standards-based instruction and could not afford the time for other opportunities such as subjects which were untested (art, filmmaking, computers, physical education) and tended to be squeezed out of the curriculum. Many argue that poor children and those at the margins were more likely to lose such enrichment activities in school as the poorest and worst performing schools had enrichment activities stripped. ELT, argued by some, would allow those opportunities to be available again. And, if done well, the expanded activities would reinforce the core subject areas, by allowing the students to apply their learning to other areas. For example, one school implemented Fitness

Math, where students use physical activity to apply math principals. The last major goal of time and learning reforms is to enhance instruction. With more time, teachers should be able to have common planning time, more professional development, and work with classroom coaches to provide additional support.

Honig (2006) outlines the goal of most newer reforms as “to ensure all students achieve high standards through systemic, deep, large-scale change...and aims to change professional practice throughout schools, districts, and states and students’ various communities”(p.11). Time and learning reform goals emanate what Honig describes. Time and learning reforms are designed to give all students the time to achieve high standards.

Targets and tools of time and learning reforms.

Targets refer to a distinct group or groups of individuals for which a policy is intended, while tools are means or approaches a policy uses to achieve its goals. Determining the targets and tools of Expanded Learning Time Reforms should be easy and direct. However, there are several layers of targets. Like the targets of the Expanded Learning Time Reform, the tools used are also nested and can be viewed through different perspectives.

Social construction of target populations has a powerful influence and shapes both the policy agenda and the design of a policy (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Professional organizations, the US Department of Education and other special interest groups and politicians shape the time and learning issue as an issue of deficiency. There isn’t enough time so American students are falling behind other countries. Schneider and Ingram describe dependents as groups weak in power with positive

constructions. The Time and Learning reform policy constructs students and teachers as benevolent beneficiaries of the policy. Teachers and students are constructed as important beneficiaries who are significant for improving the economy. While teachers and students are viewed positively, they are seen as weak in power because they do not actually make decisions to change institutional systems. This view of teachers and students as dependents is why policy makers feel the need to intervene and secure resources and provide solutions for their future. Time and learning reform is painted as a win for all Americans. More time in school will lead to better educated students and ultimately a more vibrant America.

While Time and Learning reforms identify teachers and students as benevolent dependents, the reform targets business and industry. Business and industry have great influence in the political arena. Legislatures and policy makers want to attract and retain business and revitalize and stabilize the struggling economy by providing high achieving, excellent quality workers for the workforce. Specifically examining the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative, the state is particularly interested in targeted ‘clean’, high paying industry and moving away from blue-collar manufacturing. Using Ingram and Schneider’s framework for social constructions and political power, I classify these ‘clean’ research and development firms as advantaged. This target population is positively constructed and strong in power because they are viewed by many as providing important and meaningful work for Massachusetts citizens and as being crucial to generating revenue and stability for an evolving economy.

Schneider and Ingram (1993) provide a framework to understand policy tools and their underlying behavioral theories guiding those tools. “Policy tools refers to the aspects of policy intended to motivate the target populations to comply with or utilize policy opportunities” (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). McDonnell and Elmore (1987) describe four types of policy tools including: “mandates which provide rules constraining actions of agencies or target populations; inducements that provide money to encourage certain activities; capacity, which provides dollars to enable agencies to take actions and system changing tools that alter the arrangement of agencies in the implementation system.” Time and learning reform policies may arguably be an incentive tool because it assumes the key players will not be motivated to change unless they are encouraged or influenced by money. In Massachusetts for example, schools that receive a grant to implement the initiative receive \$1,300 more per pupil to expand the school day. In a school of 500-600 students, those are substantial dollars. McDonnell and Elmore do state that “grants with highly specific purposes are inducements.”

However, the time and learning reforms can also be seen as a capacity building tool. A capacity building tool provides “information, training, education and resources to individuals, groups, or agencies to make decisions to carry out activities” (Ingram and Schneider, 1993). Ingram and Schneider (1993) point out that capacity tools are often used when groups recognize the value of the policy-preferred activity but lack sufficient resources or support to carry it out with success. In the case of Massachusetts’ ELT initiative, each grantee was provided a coach from the special interest group Mass 2020 to help them redesign their schedules, assist in conducting

analysis, and provide support. In this way Mass ELT could be seen as a capacity tool which provides resources to schools. The schools ultimately develop their own redesign of curriculum, schedule and structure based on their knowledge and the support received from those funding the initiative.

“Bully pulpit or hortatory tools--tools that rely on sheer power of argument or persuasion--have grown in prominence since the 90s” (Honig, 2006). In some ways the Time and Learning reforms are symbolic or hortatory. In statewide and visual contexts, visual images of a clock running out of time are invoked. No one wants American education or our students to run out of time. The image of the ticking clock also evokes a sense of urgency. Americans must do something about increasing student success now! What the image doesn't evoke is the complexity of time and learning. It may not be about how much time we have, but how effectively we use that time. A group of the advantaged (policy makers and special interest groups) are making decisions for a group of the dependents (teachers and students) and evoking strong images of failing economy and time running out to further push the urgency for time and learning reforms.

Implementation challenges and successes.

The implementation process of any policy is complex. Pressman and Wildvasky (1973) argue a verb like implementation must have an object like policy. Honig (2006) encourages implementation researchers and analysts to be cautious about seeking universal truths in examining the implementation process. Rather, she urges researchers to uncover how the policies, people, and places interact to produce

results. “Studies in this vein uncover how individual, group, and cognitive processes contribute to the implementer’s responses” (Spillane, 2006).

Policy effects are indirect, operating through and within the existing setting (Honig, 2006). Honig reveals implementers as significant drivers of policy. In the case of the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative, the Commonwealth has offered grants to school districts that apply for funding. School districts determine which school(s) within the district will be expanded learning time schools. Each school district decides who and how the district will engage schools in the process of applying. Once ELT planning grants are awarded, the district has one year to undergo a planning process, involving key stakeholders in decisions about expanding the school day. If the state approves the district’s plan, then schools will receive funding to expand the school day by 30% the following year. In this way, the implementation process involves a one year planning process. There are no prescriptions to the planning process and no prescriptions to how a school redesigns their time. However, if the plan is not aligned with the Commonwealth’s vision, the district will not be able to expand the school day. Some schools encountered so much resistance from parents and teachers’ unions that they were unable to develop a plan for expanding the school day. An underlying frustration from parents of elementary students in more affluent areas is that they do not want young children to be away from home for so long with parents who want to provide enrichment activities themselves to their children. On the other hand, schools which have been chronically underperforming with children from lower socioeconomic status and limited English proficiency have more easily moved to implementing the reform by dramatically restructuring their days.

“In the communities of practice perspective, learning occurs not inside the minds of individuals, but rather in the fields of social interaction between people”(Hanks in Honig, 2006). The term community of practice refers to a group of individuals who, through the pursuit of joint enterprise, have developed shared practices and common perspectives. The statewide policymakers have common thoughts and beliefs and there is an effort from outside special interest groups and consultants to share their views with schools, yet there does not seem to be communities of practice at the school level because often teachers are not engaged in the process. While the ELT reform attempts to develop a community of practice with shared meanings of what it means to be a “turn around” school and that more time will ensure more learning, not all at the school level are seeing those results.

Since policies and reforms are complex, there is often a disconnect between what is envisioned and what actually occurs. While it is envisioned that all schools who expand time will also examine their existing curricula and instructional practices, it is much more difficult to assess whether those changes are happening in each school which has expanded time. There have been some case studies of schools with expanded learning time and recent broad state-wide report that reading and math scores in schools are higher than matched comparison schools in Massachusetts. In some schools, these changes have not been seen, but these may be the schools that only added time by doing more of the same and failed to implement curriculum and teacher professional development changes fully.

The fact that some schools see benefits and some do not might be explained from the cognitive view of implementation. The cognitive view of implementation

emphasizes the ways individual understanding of policy demands impacts whether practice is altered or reinforced (Spillane, 2004). As members of school communities interact where expanded learning time initiatives are implemented, they negotiate meaning about the nature of their work and their shared understandings. Implementation involves cognition. But cognition is a social practice dependent on the people and places involved. The success and failures of individual schools and districts in implementing ELT reform is contingent on the people, place and context.

Outcomes of time and learning reform initiatives.

In late 2007, the first broad measures of student achievement in ELT schools became available through Abt Associates, and the data suggested that significant results had been achieved in a short period of time. As measured by the MCAS tests, students in ELT schools achieved greater gains in proficiency across all three core subject areas when compared to students in these schools in previous years. The number of students reaching proficiency in ELT schools grew 44% in mathematics, 39 % in English/language arts, and 19% in science compared to the 2002–2006 average for those schools.

Politics is a pervasive force that shapes the implementation of Expanded Learning Time reforms. Political perspectives unveil that actors at all levels of the system can influence policy implementation. Malen (2006) indicates actors may exercise their voice or silence others as an approach to using their power to achieve results. The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative has fueled a debate, which itself can be seen as an interesting outcome. With the late Senator Kennedy, a co-sponsor of No Child Left Behind(NCLB), supporting the movement, it comes as no surprise that

on August 1, 2008, he introduced the Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act, an important next step for the expanded learning time movement. The TIME Act would provide federal funding to support states' efforts to expand the school day in pilot schools in each state. Citing the success of the Massachusetts ELT initiative, this nation-wide reform initiative is focused on low-performing, high-poverty schools and would provide a monetary inducement to states or local educational agencies via the U.S. Department of Education. Senator Kennedy emphasized the need to help American schools remain competitive and to ensure that every student receives a 21st Century Education.

This present study examines one of the original ten schools, and the first middle school, to expand the school day in Expanded Learning Time reform in comparison to another middle school with a traditional school day in that same district.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Cornett and Blumm (1993) assert that school systems should “think first about students” before implementing education reform. Schumacker and Brookside (1992) report that a number of school superintendents selected “student attitude information” as one of the two quality indicators for successful schools. The present study adhered to the pragmatist philosophies of Peirce, James and Dewey by mixing research methods to provide evidence that meets the standard of what Dewey (1938) called “warranted assertability.” Dewey spoke of “warranted assertability” rather than universal truths. Dewey would argue that inquiry is a dynamic process by which research conclusions and knowledge are warranted through examining the ongoing, self-correcting context rather than examining a static picture or seeking a universal truth. The primary questions which I explored were:

1. What are students’ attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time (ELT) School?
 - 1a. What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time?
2. How do these experiences and attitudes compare to students in a non-ELT school?
3. What are principals’ beliefs related to time and learning?
 - 3a. Are the principals’ beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students’ reported experiences?

This study employed a mixed-methods design to explore these questions, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data and integrating the findings to better understand students' perspectives in the expanded learning time initiative. Qualitative methods have become engrained in evaluation of curricula, programs and education reform (Patton, 1980). The purpose of mixed methods is to build on the synergy and strength that exists between the quantitative and qualitative methods. The fundamental principle of mixed research is strategically mixing or combining qualitative and quantitative methods to provide complementary strengths and minimizing overlapping weaknesses (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Webb et. al. 1981). Combining qualitative and quantitative research produces integrated knowledge.

Qualitative research designs in methods are an important source of knowledge for implementation researchers (Honig, 2006). Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). Honig (2006) conducted a qualitative case study to examine implementation of four collaborative policies in a single school district. Her methodology involved triangulating data from observations, semi-structured interviews, and record data. This approach is consistent with the approach recommended by Yin (1989) and Miles and Huberman (1994) and the approach used in this study which uses thematic analysis triangulated by the data sources. Case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data through a triangulated research strategy of data sources or methods (Yin, 1984). Yin (1994) presents at least four applications for a case study: 1) to explain complex causal links

in real-life interventions; 2) to describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred; 3) to describe the intervention itself; and, 4) to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes. This study attempts to address applications two and three.

Honig (2006) outlines new approaches to implementation research in comparison to traditional methods of inquiry. She describes traditional implementation research generally concluding that policy, people, and places affect implementation, whereas more contemporary implementation research examines how policy, people and places shape implementation. Current researchers in implementation research study the interactions of people, place and policy in a way of making sense of implementation as it unfolds by using a combination of field notes, interviews and videotapes to collect data (Kemp, Tzou, & Spillane, 2002; Reiser et al., 2000; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren, 2005).

The present study used multiple sources of data and methods. The primary focus was capturing the students' perspectives. Their perspectives were captured through a series of semi-structured focus groups, followed by implementation of a student survey of the population of 8th graders used to test the themes developed as a result of the focus groups. I also conducted document review and use of secondary data sources collected by the school system and the external evaluators for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as leadership interviews in the two schools. The research design is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Research Design

Using the mixed methods typology described by Johnson and Christensen (2008), this study is categorized as QUAL→Quan, or a dominant-status sequential design. The qualitative component is dominant and occurred before the quantitative, survey data collection. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) call the QUAL-Quan Model the exploratory mixed methods design. Qualitative data are collected first and are more heavily weighted than quantitative data. The qualitative phase involved observations and/or individual and group interviews where potential hypothesis or themes emerge. In the second phase of the study, variables which emerged from the qualitative data were examined with quantitative techniques. “When qualitative methods are dominant, qualitative researchers may decide to include survey, census, Likert-scale data along with the narrative data; the validity of the qualitative results can be enhanced by the quantitative results” (Gay, Mills, Airasian, 2009).

The present study examined 8th graders at two similar middle schools within a small urban city school district in Massachusetts, one of which has expanded the school day by 30% while the other held a traditional school day. Principals at each of the middle schools were interviewed at the beginning of the study to understand the leaders' perceptions of time and learning and used to describe the context of each of school.

Next, a series of focus groups of 8th graders at each of the schools occurred. A survey of the population of 8th graders of each school followed the focus groups to further test themes developed as a result of the qualitative data collected. Document review of secondary data, evaluative reports and plans were reviewed to provide contextual detail to the study.

Setting and Participants

Pseudonyms are used in place of the schools, school district, and city in this study. The Small City Public School District (Small City) located in Massachusetts was selected purposively as the study setting. Small City was the first district in Massachusetts to expand learning time in a middle school under the Commonwealth's ELT initiative.

The city.

Small City, located in Massachusetts, is an older city which was once considered a prosperous community built on a manufacturing economy since the time of the industrial revolution. Small City's prosperity declined throughout the twentieth century leaving vacant mill buildings and a shrinking population, from 120,000 in the 1920s to less than 90,000 today. Replacement industry and commercial

redevelopment and growth have been slow in Small City for many of the same reasons as other urban centers: high rates of unemployment and poverty, a rising immigrant population with limited English Proficiency, lack of skilled workers, an increase of gangs and drugs, empty and foreclosed homes, and a diminishing tax base.

Like many other small urban cities, there seems to be invisible dividing lines in Small City which geographically place the middle-class and often White families in neighborhoods on one side of the City, in this case the north, while the families on the south side of the city face significant challenges to stay fed and clothed. Unfortunately, the community is listed within the top 100 high crime communities in the United States in 2010.

There are still remnants of the City's heritage of immigrant workers who came to a prosperous US City to find work, although new ethnic groups have arrived. Small City is a racially and ethnically diverse city. There is a vibrant culture of diversity filled with ethnic festivals, foods, family events and concerts. According to the 2000 Census, Small City's racial groups within the city were 91.2% White, 2.5% African American, 2.2% Asian and 0.2% Native American. Nearly half of the residents (47%) described themselves as being of Portuguese ancestry. The next largest groups by ancestry are French 13.4%, Irish 9.8% English 6.6% , French Canadian 5.9% , Italian 3.6% and Polish 3.4%.

Despite the low educational level of attainment in Small City, poverty and other social problems and issues, there remains a quintessential charm to some of the architecture, opportunities for development along the waterfront, and some dedicated city leaders and citizens who are committed to ensuring the City turns around. In a

2009 report of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, *Small City Public Schools District Leadership and Resource Management Evaluation Report*, several city members were interviewed and reported that supporting the schools, raising educational standards and expectations, and improving education represent the best hope for the young children of Small City.

Small city school district.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) ten year trend data from 1997 to 2007 indicate that the school district's race/ethnicity has changed. "As the percentage of white students decreased by 15.4 percentage points (from 85.8 % of all pupils to 70.4%), the percentage of Hispanic and African American students increased. In ten years, the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in Small City more than tripled (from 4.1% of all pupils to 14.4 %) and the percentage of African American pupils showed a 3.3 percentage point increase (from 4.6 % of all students to 7.9 %)." (Mass DESE, 2009). The same report indicated that the district had a higher percentage of students whose first language is not English (28.8%) than the State (15.1%) and more than twice the state percentage of students from low income families (66.5% versus 29.5 %). Unfortunately at the time when English Language Learner (ELL) support is needed most, ELL support was cut in 2008 due to budget constraints. Meanwhile, the number of students with limited English language proficiency continues to increase. In relation to student achievement, the Small City School District has been deemed underperforming and has not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in a number of years.

The participating schools.

The John Jones Middle School (Jones), grades 6-8, expanded the school day by 30% beginning in the 2006-2007 school year. In the year preceding the reform effort, Jones was one of only two middle schools across the state of Massachusetts to be named chronically, underperforming or level 4 school. Massachusetts defines a Level 4 school as one that has performed poorly on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System in both the Math and English Language Arts sections over a four-year span and hasn't shown signs of substantial improvement. The media and the Commonwealth now portray Jones as an example of what can go right when ELT is implemented. Small City spent a year planning for the expanded school day by examining their current uses of time and examining the quality of instruction and teachers. The Jones School claims to have added academic learning time which engages students through quality instruction and student selection of special electives. Students in Jones have an additional eight hours of instruction per week than the comparison school. They devote an additional one and half hours per week to Mathematics, Science, and English Language Arts instruction. This allows for double-blocks in the core content areas allowing time for hands-on activity and inquiry-driven instruction. The remaining three hours per week is devoted to electives of the student's choosing. Examples of these electives include: Ham Radio, Swimming, Journalism, Video Production, Hip-Hop, Traveling the World. They claim to have a stable teaching staff and are several years into the reform which contributes to a high degree of implementation saturation and maturation. Fidelity of reform implementation appears strong.

The Paul Peterson Middle School (Peterson) is the comparison school in the study. Of the three other grades 6-8 public middle schools located in Small City, the Peterson is most similar to Jones on student and teacher demographics and student performance. Table 1 provides the enrollment data for the Jones (ELT school) and Peterson (non-ELT school) by gender as reported for the 2010-2011 School Year by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Table 2 provides a comparison of the teacher data for the Jones and Peterson Schools as provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. There does appear to be notable differences between the schools with the non-ELT school having a higher percentage of teachers licensed in the teaching assignment (96.3%) than teachers in the ELT school (84.7%). Most notably, the student /teacher ratio at the non-ELT school is 9.6 to 1, substantially lower than the ELT school ratio of 13.0 to 1 or to the rest of the district ratio of at 14.2 to 1. These differences will be discussed in relation to their impact on the findings in Chapter 5.

Table 1
Enrollment by Gender and Race (2010-2011)

	% of ELT School	% of non-ELT School	% of District	% of State
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	48.6	52.2	51.7	51.3
Female	51.4	47.8	48.2	48.7
<u>Race</u>				
African American	6.8	6.6	6.8	8.2
Asian	1.9	6.2	4.6	5.5
Hispanic	16.4	17.9	17.5	15.4
Native American	0.8	0.0	0.3	0.2
White	71.6	67.8	67.4	68.0
Native Hawaiian/PI	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1
Multi-Race	2.5	1.5	3.3	2.4

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Table 2
Teacher Data (2009-2010)

	ELT	Non-ELT	District	State
% of Teachers Licensed in Teaching Assignment	84.7	96.3	94.7	97.1
% of Core Academic Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers	79.2	97.9	93.8	97.3
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.0 to 1	9.6 to 1	14.2 to 1	13.7 to 1

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

This study was limited to 8th grade students. Eighth grade students have the most experience in their respective schools. These students also have the expressive and receptive literacy necessary for participation in the focus group and student surveys. One of the first signs of adolescence is reflectivity, or analyzing ones' own mind and self. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, adolescents have the cognitive ability to relate past and present and to think about their future and understand the continuity of experience across time (Erikson, 1950). Since this study focused on students' perspectives which require a fair degree of reflectivity, I felt it essential to focus on the 8th graders. There were 142 8th grade students enrolled at the ELT school (Jones) and 195 8th grade students at the non-ELT School (Peterson). Finally, a middle school focused study was needed, since the majority of time and learning studies, to date, have focused on the elementary level.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released descriptive data related to the percentage of students at each performance level of the Spring 2011 MCAS in September 2011. Table 3 displays the Spring 2011MCAS results of eighth grade students at Jones (ELT) and Peterson (non-ELT). About the same percentage of students in the ELT (67%) and the non-ELT school (65%) scored proficient or higher on the English Language Arts portion of the Spring 2011 MCAS.

However, there seems to be a pronounced gap between the ELT and the non-ELT schools in the areas of Mathematics and Science and Technology and Engineering as illustrated in Figure 3. Just more than half (51%) of 8th graders in the ELT school scored proficient or higher on the 2011 Mathematics portion of the MCAS, whereas only 38% of non-ELT 8th graders obtained proficiency. On the MCAS Science Technology and Engineering test, 36% of 8th graders in the ELT school obtained proficiency or higher as compared to just 21% in the non-ELT school. This descriptive MCAS test data is presented to provide some context of the student achievement of the ELT and non-ELT schools.

Table 3
Percent of 8th Grade Students at Each Performance Level of 2011 MCAS for ELT and non-ELT Schools

	%Proficient or Higher		% Advanced		% Proficient		% Needs Improvement		% Warning/Failing	
	ELT	Non-ELT	ELT	Non-ELT	ELT	Non-ELT	ELT	Non-ELT	ELT	Non-ELT
ELA	67	65	15	7	52	58	25	23	6	12
Mathematics	51	38	23	8	28	30	25	34	24	28
Science/Tech/Engineering	36	21	1	0	35	21	40	49	23	30

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Figure 3
Percent of 8th Grade Students Scoring Proficient or Higher on 2011 MCAS by subject area for ELT and non-ELT school

Participants of focus groups.

All 8th grade students in both schools were sent a recruitment flyer (See Appendix 2) and an informed consent document during homeroom which needed to be signed and returned to school. The informed consent form, recruitment flyer and letter to parents was also translated in Spanish by a professional Spanish translator, due to the high number of students from Spanish speaking homes in the schools. Twenty-five students in the ELT (Jones) school returned a signed informed consent form, while only fifteen respondents returned the consent form in the non-ELT (Peterson) school. Of the 25 respondents returning the informed consent forms in the ELT (Jones) school, 18 were present on the day of the focus groups on December 21, 2010, a snowy day close to winter break. In the non- ELT school (Peterson), 13 of the 15

students who returned informed consent forms were present on the scheduled day of the focus groups December 16, 2010. While three focus groups were initially planned per school, two focus groups were ultimately held in each school, splitting students to ensure gender-balance between focus groups. The school guidance office also looked at the lists to ensure there were no noted gang tensions or other known issues between students that might influence the likelihood of the students to share perspectives. Details related to the focus group participants are noted in Table 4.

Table 4
Focus group participants by group

	ELT (Jones) Focus group 1	ELT (Jones) Focus group 2	Non-ELT (Peterson) Focus group 3	Non-ELT (Peterson) Focus group 4
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	4	3	3	3
Female	4	7	3	4
<u>Race</u>				
White	3	4	2	3
Minority	5	6	4	4
Total Participants	8	10	6	7

The sample of ELT students who participated in the focus group were not necessarily a representative sample of the 8th grade population. The students were recruited via a flyer in homeroom and only students who returned a signed informed consent form were considered to be selected for the study. Only 25 students returned informed consent forms from the ELT school, despite the forms being put in the hands of every student, having a professional translation to Spanish, and the principal offering a “dress-down day pass” to any student who returned a completed informed consent form signed by a parent or guardian. This recruitment approach may have disproportionately attracted the students who are very involved and very engaged in

school, rather than the average or marginal student. All 25 students who returned consent forms were considered for participating in a focus group, however the focus groups were held on a snowy day immediately preceding winter recess, so only 18 of the 25 students were in school the day of the focus group. Therefore it is possible that students who were less motivated to walk to school in the snow or have transportation were excluded from the focus group, thereby leaving a group of some of the most engaged and motivated students in the school to participate in the focus group and skew the perspectives of students more positively than the population. The focus group sampling procedure and informed consent procedures by design impacted the representative nature of the focus groups.

While the participants in the ELT focus groups might have been disproportionately engaged, the students in each set of focus groups were brought down to the focus group by the principal and introduced to the researcher. The principal, without prompting or by design of the study, gave students in the ELT school a charge. She prefaced the focus group by indicating that their opinions mattered and encouraged the students to feel free to say whatever they really felt. Students in the non-ELT school did not get a similar charge. This implementation deviation may have impacted why the focus groups in the ELT school seemed to have produced more detailed examples and discussion than the non-ELT school. In the non-ELT school, there were only three students who returned consent forms after the first recruitment flyer was sent home. Classroom visits by the researcher appeared to help a bit, ultimately bringing the number of focus group participants to 13. Lack of administrative interest and assistance with implementation proved to be very challenging. Administration

appeared resistant to being the comparison group and somewhat defensive to being compared to the ELT school from the start.

Participants of student survey.

Following the focus groups, a survey of the population of 8th graders in the ELT (Jones) school and non-ELT (Peterson) school was implemented in late Spring 2011. All students in school on the day of the survey administration had an opportunity to complete the survey. The demographics of the survey respondents is presented in Table 5. Of the 142 8th grade students enrolled in the ELT school (Jones), 101 responded to the survey resulting in a response rate of 71%. Of the 195 students enrolled at the non-ELT school, 125 responded to the survey yielding a 64% response rate.

Table 5
Demographics of Time for Learning Survey Respondents

Demographic Item	Frequency	Valid Percent
School		
ELT	101	44.7
Non-ELT	125	55.3
Total	226	100.0
Gender		
Male	113	51.4
Female	107	48.6
Total	220	100.0
Free/Reduced Lunch		
Yes	169	77.5
No	42	19.3
Don't Know	7	3.2
Total	218	100.0
Race		
Black	5	2.2
Asian	8	3.5
Latino(a)	29	12.8
White	113	50.0
More than one race	48	21.8
Other	14	6.4
Total	220	100.0
Primary At-Home		
Language		
English	177	81.9
Other	39	18.1
Total	216	100.0
Only Middle School		
Attended?		
Yes	147	69.3
No	65	30.7
Total	212	100.0

Participants of leadership interviews.

A leadership interview with the principal at the ELT school and another leadership interview with the Vice-Principal of the non-ELT school were conducted. Both leaders were White, female, and experienced school administrators.

Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

Document review.

The researcher reviewed the following documents and secondary data made available by the schools: ELT planning grant, ELT implementation plan, MCAS data, other data and documents available through the external evaluator. The purpose of the document review was to provide context for describing the Jones and Peterson schools and the Small City School District and to give the researcher necessary background information to develop the questions for the focus groups, survey, and interviews.

Leadership interviews.

The Principal of the ELT (Jones) School and Assistant Principal of the non-ELT (Peterson) school were interviewed in the early phase of the study. The reason the Assistant Principal rather than Principal was interviewed in the non-ELT (Peterson) school was that there had been a very recent leadership change. The Assistant Principal had served as interim principal in the year prior to the study and the new principal was only on his second day of work. Prior to the implementation of the focus groups, a 45-minute semi-structured interview was conducted focused on the following three questions:

1. What is the structure of the school day?
2. What do you believe is the relationship between time and learning?
3. In what ways are students engaged in making decisions about their learning at school?

Follow up questions focused on elucidating specific examples. The interview was used to examine the sub-research questions: 2a. What are principals' beliefs related to time and learning?, and, 2b. Are the principals' beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students' reported experiences? Principal interviews

were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Written informed consent was obtained by the leaders and the researcher followed the Principal Protocol located in Appendix 1.

Focus groups.

Two focus groups of 8th grade students in each of the middle schools were conducted. The focus groups were recorded using a digital voice recorder and results used to develop themes related to the research questions: What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School? What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time? How do these experiences and attitudes compare to students in a non-ELT school?

Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) recommend that focus group researchers in social science work with five to eight participants who have a shared experience, yet are heterogeneous in some ways to highlight differences in experiences. The focus groups took place during the school day. The focus groups in the ELT (Jones) school were held in an unoccupied conference room around a conference table. The focus groups in the non-ELT (Peterson) school were held in an unoccupied classroom where the researcher arranged the desks in a large circle. Each focus group lasted approximately 45 minutes (one class period). In each school, the participating students were called to report to the designated focus group room by the school secretary at the start of the period. The researcher provided a pass for students to return to class. Students were informed that they could receive a pass to return to class at any time should he/she want to discontinue participation as part of the student assent process.

The advantage to focus groups over individual interviews is that they are efficient in terms of time and often helpful to encourage interaction among peers and enhance a deeper discussion among adolescents. There is not extensive literature on interviewing middle school aged youth, and even less on interviewing middle school aged youth in groups.

Van Galen, Hare and Noblit (1986) describe that they have successfully conducted group interviews with middle and high school students to minimize cost and time, although they concede the group interview strays away from traditional qualitative methods of studying individuals in the natural setting. Yet, if there is a focused group of questions and the group members have a degree of homogeneity, then the group interview can be very useful. A challenge of conducting the group interview with adolescents is that there will have to be a conscious effort at managing the group. Children do not typically know interview standards, rules or etiquette. Interviewing students is an art.

I utilized the broad focus group interview protocol structure proposed by Van Galen, Hare, and Noblit (1986): I. Introduce self, purpose of study, why we are here; II. Set the task; III. Outline the rules of a focus group interview IV. Ask Orientation Questions V. Conduct the Interview; VI. Ask if there is anything else they want to share; VII. Thank Students. The focus group protocol utilized is included in Appendix 2. While individual interviews, coupled with observations, would be another very good way at understanding students' perspectives, it is not the method used for this study.

Student survey.

After the focus groups were analyzed and themes emerged from the qualitative data, a survey instrument was developed to confirm indications, thoughts, and themes within the larger student demographic (8th graders at both the ELT and non-ELT school).

While a pre-survey evaluation focus-group was initially planned to pilot the questions of the survey, the researcher decided to use the majority of items from a validated instrument, rather than creating new items, as originally planned. Therefore, a pre-survey focus group to pilot the questions did not occur.

The survey instrument, *Time for Learning* survey, (See Appendix 3) is comprised of several scales of the *School Success Profile* (SSP) and supplemented by demographic questions, and a small number of researcher-developed items focused on peer to peer learning, time well spent, and student choice. The alignment of the individual survey items to the survey scales is found in Appendix 4 and discussed below.

The SSP is a tool designed for informing, monitoring, and evaluating social work interventions with middle and high school students. The SSP was developed after a comprehensive review of the school success literature by Gary L. Bowen and Jack M. Richman of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Permission was obtained from the Dr. Bowen to utilize the scales of 6 of the 22 core dimensions assessed by SSP: Academic Relevancy, Academic Rigor, Learning Climate, Teacher Support, School Satisfaction, and Student Engagement. Each dimension is a summary scale that includes multiple items. Since its development in 1993, the SSP has undergone four revisions (1993, 1997, 2001, 2005). The 2001 version of the SSP was subjected

to a rigorous test for reliability and validity (Bowen, Rose, & Bowen, 2005). “Based on a nonprobability sample of more than 16,000 middle and high school students across 351 school sites and six states who took the SSP between July 2001 and March 2003, the findings provided support for the internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the SSP core profile dimensions”.

Bowen and Rosenthal report that the most recent version of the SSP, the version from which the *Time and Learning* survey utilized several of the dimensions/scales, was revised based on the extensive psychometric evaluation conducted on the 2001 version. They further report that 18 of the 22 dimensions of the SSP had reliability coefficients greater than .80, which is considerably higher than cutoffs of .60 or .70 as minimally acceptable with large samples (Rosenthal, 1994). The SSP was designed to provide indicators by which interventions might be modified to ensure student success.

The first scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is Academic Relevancy, or the degree to which the students perceive that teachers and the school provide real-world connections to the student’s future. The source of this scale are items from the SSP. The number of items comprising this scale is eleven. The items testing this scale were each rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The items correspond with Items 3a through 3k on the *Time for Learning* survey (See Appendix 3). The items included are: 1) My teachers know a lot about different jobs and careers; 2) My teachers ask me about my interests in future jobs and careers; 3) My teachers help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to the real world; 4) My teachers help me see the value to what I am

learning in the classroom; 5) My teachers help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to my own experiences and interests; 6) My teachers explain the importance of assignments to my learning; 7) My teachers often give examples in class from jobs and careers; 8) My teachers help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to jobs and careers; 9) My teachers assign work that connects what I am learning in the classroom to jobs and careers; 10) My teachers encourage me to talk with other adults about their jobs and careers, and; 11) My teachers encourage me to think about my future as an adult.

The second scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is Academic Rigor, or the degree to which the students perceive that teachers have high expectations and standards. The source of this scale is the SSP. The number of items comprising this scale is ten. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The items correspond with Items 2i through 2s on the *Time for Learning* survey (See Appendix 3). The items included are: 1) My teachers expect me to do my best; 2) My teachers set high standards for classroom performance; 3) My teachers challenge me to do better in school; 4) My teachers assign work that makes me think; 5) My teachers let me know when I am doing less than my best work; 6) My teachers encourage me when they think that I can do better; 7) My teachers ask questions that make me think; 8) My teachers assign work that challenges me; 9) My teachers let me know how I can improve classroom performance; 10) My teachers let me know when I am doing my best work.

The third scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is Learning Climate. The source of this scale is the SSP. The SSP defines the Learning Climate dimension as “Youth attend a school where students get a good education, where students needs come first, where adults at school affirm and care about students, and where every student is valued.” The number of items comprising this scale is seven. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The items correspond with Items 4a through 4g on the *Time for Learning* survey (See Appendix 3). Students were asked to indicate agreement with each of the following statements about his/her school. The items include: 1) Students’ needs come first at this school; 2) Every student is important at this school; 3) This is a very good school to attend; 4) Adults at this school welcome ideas and opinions of students; 5) Students get a good education at this school; 6) Teachers at this school care about students; 7) The principal at this school cares whether or not students come to school.

The fourth scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is School Satisfaction. The source of this scale is the SSP. The SSP describes the dimension of school satisfaction as “Youth enjoy going to their school, get along well with teachers and others students, and report that they are getting a good education.” The number of items comprising this scale is 7. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a three point scale from not like me (1), a little like me (2), and a lot like me (3). The items correspond with Items 1a through 1g on the *Time for Learning* survey (See Appendix 3). Students were asked how well each of the statements describes him/her. The items include: 1) I enjoy going to school; 2) I get along well with others at this

school; 3) I feel close to other students at this school; 4) I get along well with teachers at this school; 5) I am getting a good education at this school; 6) I feel like I belong at this school, and; 7) I am happy that I attend this school.

The fifth scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is Student Engagement. The source of this scale is the SSP. The SSP define this dimension as “youth report that they find school fun and exciting, look forward to learning new things at school, and look forward to going to school.” The number of items comprising this scale is 4. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a three point scale from not like me (1), a little like me (2), and a lot like me (3). The items correspond with Items 1h through 1k on the *Time for Learning* Survey (See Appendix 3). Students were asked how well each of the statements describes him/her. The items include: 1) I find school fun and exciting; 2) I look forward to learning new things at school; 3) I look forward to going to school; 4) I am often bored at school. Please note that the last item “I am often bored at school” was reverse coded for data analysis.

The sixth scale measured by the *Time for Learning* Survey is Teacher Support. The source of this scale is the SSP. The SSP defines the Teacher Support dimension as “Youth perceive teachers at their school as supportive, caring about them and their academic success, and as expecting them to do their best.” The number of items comprising this scale is 8. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The items correspond with Items 2a through 2h on the *Time for Learning* survey (See Appendix 3). Students were asked to indicate agreement with each of the following statements: 1) My teachers care about me; 2) My teachers listen to what I have to say;

3) My teachers care whether or not I come to school; 4) My teachers give me a lot of encouragement; 5) My teachers show me respect; 6) My teachers knows my strength as a student; 7) My teachers praise my efforts when I work hard, and ; 8) My teachers care about the grades I make.

The seventh scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is Peer to Peer Learning, or opportunities for collaborative learning. This scale is a researcher-developed scale based upon discussions from the focus groups. The number of items comprising this scale is 3. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The items correspond with Items 4n through 4p on the *Time for Learning* survey (See Appendix 3). Students were asked to indicate agreement with each of the following statements: 1) Teachers encourage me to participate in groupwork; 2) Teachers provide opportunities for me to present my work to my peers, and; 3) Teachers provide opportunities to learn from my peers.

The eighth scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is Student Choice, or the degree to which students perceive they have choice and voice in what they are learning. This scale is a researcher-developed scaled based upon discussions from the focus groups. The number of items comprising this scale is 3. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The items correspond with Items 4h, 4q, 4r on the *Time for Learning* Survey (See Appendix 3). Students were asked to indicate agreement with each of the following statements: 1)Students' ideas and opinions are

valued at this school; 2) Teachers allow me to choose project topics; 3) I have choices about what I learn in school.

The ninth scale measured by the *Time for Learning* survey is Time Well Spent, or the degree to which students perceive that time is used effectively in school. This scale is a researcher-developed scaled based upon discussions from the focus groups and literature review. The number of items comprising this scale is 4. The items comprising this scale were each rated on a four point scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). The items correspond with Items 4j through 4m on the *Time for Learning* survey (See Appendix 3). Students were asked to indicate agreement with each of the following statements: 1) I have enough time in the school day to complete my work; 2) There is enough time to ask questions in class; 3) The school day is just the right amount of time, and; 4) Time is well spent in this school.

The purpose of the survey was not for external generalization outside of the school district; rather it was another data source used to capture and confirm students' perspectives within Small City. The survey results inform whether or not the themes which seemed to emerge from the focus groups can be generalized to the 8th grade population at these two Small City schools.

Once the *Time for Learning* survey was finalized, a modification to the Institutional Review Board application was submitted and approved. All 8th grade students in each of the schools received a Parent Notification Form which was professionally translated into Spanish then distributed in English and Spanish to all 8th grade parents in each of the schools (see Appendix 3). The notification form provided

an opt-out by calling or contacting the school's designated contact or the researcher within one week. No families opted out from participation.

Following the opt-out period, the designated contact person at ELT (Jones) and non-ELT (Peterson) distributed the surveys during home room period on one day in the last few weeks of school. The surveys were not completed on the same day at each school; however they were completed at the same time of year (after MCAS implementation and before the end of the school year). The students were able to complete the survey in fifteen minutes. Surveys were anonymous. No tracking of student participation by homeroom teachers was kept. Students were not required to fill out the survey. Homeroom teachers returned completed, partially completed, and blank surveys to the designated school contacts. The designated school contact person returned the complete and partially complete surveys to the researcher. The researcher originally planned to conduct implementation with a team of colleagues to ensure consistency of implementation and instructions, however, the administration of Jones and Peterson felt strongly that they wanted to implement the survey internally. Additionally, the designated contact at Peterson (non-ELT) took an extended medical leave at the end of the study causing an implementation delay and new contact person to be identified. Each school designated contact person received \$50 in gift cards for Amazon.com to be used as seen fit for the school. No student-level incentives were offered.

Data Analysis

Focus group analysis.

Since focus group data is one of several sources of data for the study, transcription was not verbatim. Transcriptions included complete thoughts, but did not highlight silences and background noises. Focus groups were transcribed quickly to resolve ambiguities while the session was still fresh. Since multiple focus groups were conducted, notes and transcripts were reviewed to identify any additional topics to be pursued in the next focus group. The researcher paid a recent Wellesley College graduate to transcribe the data. The graduate had served as a research assistant on several large, sponsored studies and had many years of transcription experience. Once the focus group discussions were transcribed by the transcriptionist, the researcher then listened to each audiotape and filled in and corrected transcripts. During this process, the researcher also began taking notes and reflecting on the data. The next step in the focus group data analysis involved coding the transcribed focus group data according to a three-step procedure suggested by Bogdan and Biklin (1998) and supported by Boyatzis (1998) work on thematic analysis and code development. First, focus group transcripts were read in their entirety at least twice on three different evenings.

Next, the researcher conducted an initial coding by generating numerous category codes, labeling data that were related without worrying about the variety of the thematic categories. The final step was focused coding to eliminate, combine, or subdivide coding categories, and look for repeating ideas and larger themes that connected codes. Coding may have been strengthened by adding one or two

independent coders, thereby showing inter-rater reliability; however the practical complications of adding this time and expense outweighed the benefit. This is particularly true in the case of this study, as there was a student survey that served to further validate the emergent themes.

Principal/leadership interviews.

Principal interviews were transcribed using the same procedure as the student focus groups described above, as suggested by Bogdan and Bilkin (1998) and supported by Boyatzis (1998). Principal interviews were conducted for the purpose of the secondary research questions. Given the number of interviews was limited to two, the analysis consisted of summarizing the themes and highlights of the respective interviews.

***Time for Learning* survey analysis.**

Survey responses for each question of each survey were entered into an SPSS database. A reliable undergraduate student was compensated to conduct a majority of the data entry after the researcher provided training; defined the variables, and; set up the database. The researcher then conducted data cleaning and quality check procedures by running frequencies and looking for obvious data entry errors and outliers and by randomly checking the data entered for 25 surveys, or approximately 10% of surveys entered.

Once the raw data file was cleaned, the researcher calculated summary scale scores for each of the nine scales (Academic Relevancy, Academic Rigor, Learning Climate, School Satisfaction, Student Engagement, Teacher Support, Peer to Peer Learning, Student Choice, Time Well Spent). For SSP derived scales, the researcher

used the summary scales coding and scoring guide which consisted of the following instructions: 1) Code responses; 2) Count number of valid. Be sure the number valid (N valid) meets threshold for inclusion; 3) Add scores of valid; 4) Divide summary score by number of valid. See Table 6 for coding range and N valid required for inclusion by summary scale.

Table 6
Threshold of N valid for Receiving Summary Score by Scale

Scale	N Valid for inclusion	N of Items	Coding Range
SSP Scales			
Academic Relevancy	6	11	1-4
Academic Rigor	6	10	1-4
Learning Climate	4	7	1-4
School Satisfaction	4	7	1-3
Student Engagement	3	4	1-3
Teacher Support	5	8	1-4
Researcher Developed			
Peer to Peer Learning	3	3	1-4
Student Choice	3	3	1-4
Time Well Spent	3	4	1-4

Frequencies were run for demographic description purposes. A Chi Square was used to examine whether significant differences existed between demographics of survey respondents between Jones (ELT) and Peterson (non-ELT). A Chi Square Test of Independence tests whether or not two variables are independent of each other. The test was used to determine if the respondents in Jones (ELT) and Peterson (non-ELT) differed significantly on the following demographics: Race, Gender, Free or reduced Lunch, Primary at home Language English, and Only Middle School Attended. The demographics were each measured by nominal level data as described in Table 5. However, the benefit of the Chi Square is that very few assumptions are needed and it is deemed appropriate for nominal level measures. The hypothesis is that the survey

respondents demographics will not significantly differ between the schools, or in another words the samples will be very similar in demographics.

Cronbach's α (alpha) is a coefficient of reliability or internal reliability used to examine the internal reliability of the *Time for Learning* survey. Cronbach's alpha will generally increase as the intercorrelations among test items increase. Because intercorrelations among test items are maximized when all items measure the same construct, Cronbach's alpha is widely believed to indirectly indicate the degree to which a set of items measures a single one-dimensional construct. A commonly accepted rule of thumb for describing internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha is that $\alpha \geq .70$ is acceptable.

Cronbach's α was applied to each of the following scales of the School Success Profile (SSP): Teacher Support, Learning Climate, Academic Rigor, Academic Relevancy, School Satisfaction, School Engagement ,as well as, to the investigator developed scales: Peer to Peer Learning, Time and Learning, and Student Choice to determine the internal reliability of the scales. With the exception of the Student Choice scale ($\alpha=.683$), every scale had an acceptable level of internal consistency $\geq .70$ as noted in Table 7. While the Student Choice scale did not meet the $\geq .70$ threshold, it seems to have a reasonable level of reliability given that there are only a few items in the scale and it is very close to approaching the .70 threshold.

Table 7

Internal Consistency of Survey Scales utilized in Time for Learning Survey

Scale	N of Valid Cases	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
<u>SSP Scales</u>			
Academic Relevancy	212	11	.928*
Academic Rigor	222	10	.900*
Learning Climate	212	7	.859*
School Satisfaction	219	7	.785*
Student Engagement	221	4	.742*
Teacher Support	220	8	.887*
<u>Researcher Developed</u>			
Peer to Peer Learning	220	3	.786*
Student Choice	223	3	.683
Time Well Spent	216	4	.711*

*considered to be acceptable level of internal reliability $\alpha \geq .70$

Descriptive results of the ELT (Jones) and non-ELT (Peterson) schools on each scale of the *Time for Learning* survey were run and will be presented. Following the descriptive results, a MANOVA or Multivariate Analysis of Variance was conducted. As described in Cronk (2008), MANOVA assumes that there are multiple dependent variables that are related to each other and that each dependent variable is normally distributed and measured on an interval scale. MANOVA is used to test more than one dependent variable, much in the same way that ANOVA looks at all levels of an independent variable at once. While it is certainly possible to run one univariate test or t-test for each dependent variable, in this case each summary scale score, this often causes Type I error. Type I error occurs when the null hypothesis is rejected when it is in fact true; that is, the null hypothesis is wrongly rejected. The MANOVA looked at all the dependent variables at once to determine if there was an overall effect. The MANOVA shows whether or not there is an overall difference in the way the students

from the ELT and non-ELT responded to the survey. If there is an overall effect, then results of the univariate tests (ANOVAs) for each dependent variable (Academic Relevancy, Academic Rigor, Learning Climate, School Satisfaction, Student Engagement, Teacher Support, Peer to Peer Learning, School Choice, Time Well Spent) are interpreted to identify the significance of particular dependent variables in relation to ELT and non-ELT respondents.

The multiple data sources were used to provide an in-depth mixed-methods study of an ELT and non-ELT middle school within Small City, MA. The results of the study will be presented as follows: summary of principal/leadership interviews; themes which emerged from the focus groups; survey data results. The discussion will weave the various data sources together to answer the research questions as outlined in Table 8.

Table 8

Research Questions, Data Sources, Analysis Matrix

Research Question	Data Source(s)	Analysis/Results
What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School?	2 Focus groups of 8th graders at ELT School (Jones); 2 Focus Groups of 8th graders at non-ELT school (Peterson) Student Survey; Document Review	Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts ; Student survey focused on emergent themes.
What do students in an ELT school perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time?	Focus groups of 8th graders at ELT school (Jones); <i>Time for Learning</i> survey; Document Review	Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts; Student survey focused on emergent themes.
How do these experiences and attitudes toward time and learning compare to students in a non-ELT school?	Focus groups in comparison school (Peterson), <i>Time for Learning</i> survey; Document review	Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts ; Student survey focused on emergent themes (MANOVA)
What are principals' beliefs related to time and learning?	Principal interviews	Summary of principal interviews
Are the principals' beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students' reported experiences?	Principal interviews, student focus groups, informal observations, <i>Time for Learning</i> Student Survey	Integration and reflection of all sources of data

Why Mixed Methods?

As Krathwohl (1998) noted “Research, however is a creative act; don’t confine your thinking to specific approaches. Researchers creatively combine the elements of methods in any way that makes sense for the study they want to do. Their own limits are their own imagination and the necessity of presenting their findings convincingly. The research question to be answered really determines the methods.” (p.27). In this

case, the research questions proposed, combined with the strengths and limitations of the study setting, determined the methods employed in the design.

Quantitative research methods are characterized by a deductive approach with an objective reality, focused on cause-effect relationships, testing hypotheses and selecting participants as randomly as possible in order to generalize the results. On the other hand, qualitative methods are characterized based on an inductive approach, focused on interpreting participants' perspectives, focused on describing relationships, and purposefully selecting its participants based on their experience in the research setting. Quantitative research is more closely aligned with the positivist paradigm of examining phenomena into parts and stripping the context of a situation to study an issue in its pure state. Qualitative research on the other hand considers the context to be critical and examines issues holistically. This crude presentation of the polarity of the methods may leave some wondering "How can a researcher possibly use these two diametrically opposed approaches to one study?" It is completely possible, when you let your research question lead you, to end in a place where integrating both approaches is appropriate.

Evaluation, program, and policy research occurs in a tight timeline which involves using techniques that will maximize the quality and quantity of data collected in a minimum amount of time. Wiersma and Jurs (2009) identify that research in school settings, particularly those examining school reform projects, are typically the types of projects for which mixed methods are best suited. The same issues in the general debate over quantitative and qualitative paradigms arise in discussion of mixed methods research. The purpose of mixed methods is to build on the synergy and

strength of each method to understand the phenomenon more fully than using either of the methods on its own.

Among the purposes for mixed-method evaluation design, Greene et al. (1989) highlight five major purposes: 1) triangulation, 2) complementarity, 3) development, 4) initiation, and 5) expansion. Greene uses triangulation to refer to using mixed methods to test the consistency of findings obtained through different methods. Frankell and Warren (in Merton, 2006) point out that it is important to collect multiple measures on the variables of interest in the study. Collecting multiple measures encourages triangulation of measures. By examining students' perspectives by first asking them what they think and feel and later testing the themes heard with the larger population, I felt more confident in reporting the results of the students' perspectives in the ELT school versus the non-ELT school.

Complementarity clarifies and illustrates results from one method with the use of another method. In my case, the student survey results illustrated more fully the result of the student focus groups. Development results from one method shape subsequent methods or steps in the research process. The principal interviews and document review gave me important context necessary to best shape the focus group questions.

Initiation stimulates new research questions or challenges results obtained through one method. In this case, the focus groups, principal interviews and student surveys created an interesting interplay and challenge. Expansion provides richness and detail to the study exploring specific features of each method. In this case, integration of procedures mentioned above expanded the breadth of the study and

likely gave a bigger picture of students' perspectives in the Expanded Learning Time Initiative.

Mixed methods approach is not without its limitations. First, it requires a comprehensive understanding of both approaches. The researcher must be able to understand and articulate both perspectives and respond to critiques of both. Further, the researcher must be careful not to mix the methods haphazardly. The selection of the methods and approaches must be thoughtful and consistent. As described above, this study used the QUAL-> Quan typology, or exploratory mixed methods approach. This is a primarily qualitative research approach (case study) that uses mixed methods (focus groups-qualitative) and a survey (quantitative) to validate defined patterns which emerge from the focus groups. I have also used a "case control", matched comparison case, to identify factors associated with not having the ELT initiative to answer my research question related to comparing perspectives of students in the ELT and non-ELT schools. This approach is consistent with LeCompte and Schensul's (1999) description of the interaction of quantitative methods with qualitative research designs.

When dealing with a study that examines time and learning, I'd be remiss if I didn't consider time as a factor when employing methods. Lengthy methods would not be terribly helpful in understanding the students' perspectives about time and learning. The techniques I employed are less than perfect as they are confounded by efficiency and feasibility issues. However, the techniques employed are perhaps the most ideal to capture students' perspectives in a very dynamic environment. Other researchers who have examined students' perspectives in relation to school reform

have employed either individual interviews alone or mixed methods (focus groups and surveys). The researchers who have conducted individual interviews over several years (Wasley, Hampel and Clark, 1997, and Wilson and Corbett, 2001), have rich narratives of five or six children over the course of many years. They study the students through observation and multiple interviews in their natural setting as many ethnographic approaches do so very well. Yet, those interested in school reform are also very interested in knowing whether what is learned is important to the larger question of the reform. My study has as its audience school leaders who might be considering expanding the school day. For that reason, a completely qualitative approach may not be enough. Therefore, the survey data adds some support to the stories and themes which emerged from the focus groups.

Some other contemporary researchers who look at school reform through students' perspectives are approaching their studies similar to the way I have chosen to do so. In 2008, Spires, Lee, Turner and Johnson undertook a study to highlight middle school students' perspectives about what they needed to be engaged in school settings. They used a large scale survey followed by focus group procedures and analysis. York-Barr, & Paulsen (1996) conducted a study of students' perspectives of desired high school experiences and outcomes prior in the early phases of restructuring of a school. First, three focus groups of students representing varied experiences in high school were facilitated to obtain in-depth perspectives. Second, the questions used during the focus groups were modified and reformatted as a survey and disseminated to the entire high school population.

While mixed methods research has a great deal of use and benefit, particularly in relation to examining school reform, the approach is not without problems. The competing paradigms and those who are firmly in one camp or another will critique the interplay and messiness. The approach requires a level of purposiveness by the researcher and the keen ability to integrate the knowledge in reporting the results in a way that those on either side of the paradigm can see value.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Principal Interview Summaries

Vice-principal interview-non-ELT School (Peterson).

The non-ELT school leadership interview was conducted with the vice-principal, who had served as interim principal the year earlier. This person left the school at the end of the year of data collection. This school like most of the other schools in this school district has been plagued with inconsistent leadership. In the past five years, there have been five different people serving as principal. The school is considered chronically underperforming and was in the midst of finalizing and implementing a school improvement plan.

The leadership interview focused on the same core questions as the ELT (Jones) principal interview. The vice-principal described a distributive leadership style within the school where everyone in the school participated in moving forward the school's objectives. In describing the structure of the school day, the vice-principal described 90 minute blocks which allow for workshops and fun, hands-on activities. In contrast to the visionary leadership described by the ELT principal, the vice-principal talked about curriculum and pedagogy being driven by professional development teams from within the school and training by professionals from outside of the school. She identified much of the focus of the school is offering and providing professional development and conducting "learning walks", where teachers observe each other's practice to learn.

When probed whether teachers have been excited or interested in the professional development offered, she offered “For the most part, I think the majority have. But you also get teachers who smile and get passive-aggressive and are not implementing it. A lot of them were not implementing it in the classrooms. You really had to get buy in from them.” She said she learned teachers were not implementing the practices they learned in professional development from classroom visits she and members of a professional development team conducted across the school. She talked about having some class sizes as low as 12-15 students in inclusion classes for individualized and peer level instruction. She reported that the professional development and smaller class sizes in the last year had a positive impact on the school’s performance. She stated, “last year was the first year we saw a major improvement in ELA and math. We’re attributing that to best teaching practices within the classrooms, the professional development that they receive, the classroom visits, providing support to teachers who need it, like a math coach, literacy coach. And, now we have lead teachers...We have teachers who videotape their lessons. We have a lot of good things going on here.”

When asked in what ways students were engaged in their learning, the vice-principal immediately started talking about how the school established a student council to get students’ input: “The new principal now has decided that it would be nice to have some students on the, I’ll call it the school improvement team.”

The vice-principal said there was absolutely enough time in the school day to meet students’ needs. She said “we want everything to be student centered in the

classroom, where the teacher is the audience, so to speak, and the kids are engaged in their own learning. They are doing the teaching. They are doing it all.”

Reflecting on the relationship of time and learning, the vice principal stated “It’s usually time-managed within the classroom so that the focus is completely on teaching and learning. How can I say this? Many of the teachers have timers where they do an opener for 10 minutes, then they get into the workshop model completely, and the students are engaged in their own learning during the group piece, then getting up and demonstrating their own learning to their classmates where questions are coming up from one classmate to another, which is all inquiry based.” She described students driving the instruction in this school and admitted that the school isn’t there 100% yet, but making steady progress at encouraging writing across the curriculum. She talked about the challenges of getting those teaching subjects which are not tested by the state also engaged in the professional development and approaches on inquiry-based education.

She was quick to point out that many of the problems in the school stem from a lack of parent involvement and from the students’ socio-emotional issues, rather than from teacher effort. “Many of our teachers stay after school on their own-every night. We have a majority give extended time to kids if they don’t understand something. And many of the kids won’t go. The middle school year, this is the age they want to be out with their friends and doing their thing... Teachers call parents all the time, invite them to come in, and want them to work with them. Sometimes you don’t get the support from parents. A lot of our kids come from one parent families. It’s hard. But

we have to support the social-emotional piece before these kids will learn: they have so many issues.”

In sharing the school’s draft school improvement plan, the vice principal highlighted an additional school adjustment counselor as important and adding a bit more instructional time. This school had applied and was not selected to receive a grant to expand the school day several years ago. She expressed a bit of resentment in not receiving the grant; yet teachers were still devoting more time to students. She stated, “Now, between you and I. Because they wanted the extended day, but it would cost more because of it. These teachers will be the ones doing it, and what are they getting? \$5,000. The state wants to declare us level four, and yet they are saying we’re looking at Peterson in a different light because scores have moved up. So with everybody participating in the grant, we were supposed to get one million. Now they say we are getting \$129,000 to turn around. Do you think that’s fair? Now we’re writing letters, screaming about that, getting parents involved. It isn’t right. You want to declare us as level 4 but don’t want to give us the funds to make the changes.” She further stated that administrators get nothing for being there day and night. Much of the interview was spent highlighting superb teaching and then devolved to frustration at how this school is expected to do more for less.

ELT principal interview (Jones).

The principal of the ELT school is an experienced administrator who worked for more than 20 years in an urban school district in a neighboring state. She came to this school district one year prior to the implementation of the ELT reform. The school was significantly underperforming and was slated for state takeover for its chronically

underperforming status. Prior to the arrival of the current principal in 2006, the school had gone through a number of interim and short-term leaders as the school district and state struggled to determine the changes needed to turn this underperforming middle school around. The Principal arrived to a staff that had been functioning without clear and consistent leadership and direction. From the Principal's perspective, many staff members were not ready for the change and vision she had. In describing her leadership style, the ELT principal states, "I like to think I find the strength in people, and that expectations can be made clear. I find people's strengths, but I am also a believer in clear expectations and that all people will perform up to the expectations as long as it's clear, I can be bossy though. And abrupt."

In reflecting on the Expanded Learning Time Reform conception and implementation, the Principal described a middle school that had double blocks of mathematics, English, and science and technology because the scores were so low but also described that the curriculum was stripped of electives and there wasn't focus on the fun of learning. She states "when we added ELT, we basically thought that we would add some support to English and math and science because those are the three areas tested by MCAS at the middle level, and we wanted more fun stuff too." She expanded that fun electives included karate, swimming, intramural sport, knitting, sewing, and painting.

In the first year of ELT implementation, the Expanded Learning Time was added onto the end of the day. The school applied for funding and didn't learn until late July that the school received funding to implement the reform the following September. By necessity, the school had two versions of a schedule ready to go, one

with a traditional schedule and the second with a modified schedule adding an hour and a half extra time as an extra block at the end of the day. Parents were immediately notified in July that students would remain in school until 4:00 pm. Parents had the option of sending their child to one of the other three middle schools in the school district. However, the opposite occurred. The Principal hypothesizes that the school district has a high number of working poor without adequate child care for middle schoolers, which is why she received calls from many parents outside of the school who wanted their children to attend Jones Middle School.

In the first year of implementation, Jones used additional time for electives which the students were able to select. The Principal described that choosing electives in their interest area was a welcomed shift for students. However, it was even more of a shift for students to be in heterogeneous settings for the electives, since prior to this students were always in homogeneous cohorts. While adding an elective at the end of the day and mixing students heterogeneously was quite a shift for the students in the school, the Principal indicated that the first year implementation was not enough and needed to be adjusted.

When asked to reflect how the implementation of the reform had changed from the first year, the Principal discussed that merely adding a block at the end of the day was not an effective strategy of expanded learning time. She explained that the time of day was adjusted to start a bit earlier (7:10) than before (7:30) and stay until 3:30. Additionally, the ELT block at the end of the day was subsequently eliminated and integrated to rotate throughout the day. Rotating the block allowed the school to take advantage of community resources such as SMILES, a mentor program for business

people to visit the school and mentor middle school youth in the early morning and to take advantage of accessing swimming time at the local YMCA during the day. The district's gifted and talented program was also placed at this middle school to take advantage of the enrichment opportunities and flexibility that this school had to offer.

The ELT principal discussed the flexibility needed by teachers and administrators to shape the expanded learning time when she stated:

We've varied our philosophy from year to year, but for example last year, those kids at the very top of the scale got no English and math. And those at the low end of the scale got more English and math. And there were single periods instead of double blocks during ELT. So they'd have four singles of English if they were at the low end and more electives if they were at the high end. We've since changed that too and come back to thinking that even the top kids need at least one period of EL and Math... The other thing I would mention about Expanded Learning Time is that there was no curriculum for it. So, for me, the way I think, this is like a fantastic opportunity to create curriculum with teachers. For some teachers it was a big problem, because they want to be told what to do. So what developed was a planning time (ELT Principal, 2011).

The principal went on to say that they have half-year courses and are trying to experiment with changing the schedule and curriculum.

When asked to describe in her words the relationship between time and learning, the principal provided the following very insightful comments:

Well, I guess, you would say there are some corollaries, that, more time doesn't necessarily mean better learning. What it does mean though is that if there are opportunities to learn in different ways, and if that learning is rigorous, then it can create more learning. So what makes a difference is what happens in the classroom. In other words, if you have more time and still have terrible teaching, then it's just more terrible teaching. But, if you try to create something in a different way and create different modes of learning for kids, then I think that they would remember more and know more. So one of the things that we did was that all of our teachers have been told that expanded learning time classes have to be project-based (ELT Principal, 2011).

The Principal appeared very committed to project-based and experiential learning. She talked of challenges in getting more veteran teachers to change their long-held pedagogical approaches. But, ultimately she said, she assessed their performance, tied merit-based increases to their compliance, set clear expectations and provided support. She provided an example of a veteran math teacher who had an “Aha” moment. “So I remember one of our very veteran teachers who have since retired, who was a math teacher-and Math teachers have a tendency to be more rigid so to say-so I told her that classes must be project based. And so I remember one of the ways she taught fractions was kids created their own, I don’t know, ideal living room. And they had to create a living room out of cardboard, so make a 3-dimensional thing. So they had to take a little thing and multiply it by a fraction to get a big thing. So she said something to me like ‘Ah! The kids are learning so much more this way.’”

Project-based experiences encouraged the students to take more ownership in their learning. The principal talked about recognizing and encouraging students who take active participation in and responsibility in their learning. She encouraged teachers to promote peer-to-peer learning in the classroom. She said “And so what I am wanting to see-and I’m very clear about this with faculty, we just had a PD {professional development} session about it-is I want to see kids asking kids questions while kids are presenting. And I would like those questions to be high quality... And, I’d like teachers to count it as a mark. As much as the kids are presenting, and that is a grade, I would like the kids that are asking questions to get graded.”

The Principal reported that she did have some school climate data that seemed a bit disconcerting. She said students felt that teachers didn’t really care about kids.

The school implemented advisory in the 2010-2011 academic year in an effort to make better connections with students. “Advisory” is commonly seen as a critical tool to making better connections between teachers and students in middle school reform. Advisory provides time in the school day to ensure that each student is known by at least one adult (advisor) in the school and to help every student find ways of being successful within the school.

Chronically underperforming schools often do not have consistent leadership. This principal felt strongly that the longevity and consistency of leadership is essential to implementing a successful reform and maintaining high standards. She reflected about her own experience as a teacher in an urban high school in a neighboring state from 1970 to 1985 where she served under 19 different principals. In her fifth year at the ELT school, she is the longest serving principal ever of this 50 year old school. Holding her hand out and making a gesture of climbing from low to high, the principal stated, “Well what I want to say that ELT is part of one package with more rigorous instruction, higher expectations, more accountability, targeted instruction based on skills emphasis. All of this has helped. Our school has suddenly-a couple of years ago we didn’t make AYP, nonetheless our scores have been going like this...it’s a steady increase.”

Focus Group Findings

Several themes seemed to clearly and prominently rise to attention from students’ perspectives as expressed in focus groups. These themes are: 1) Peer to peer collaboration and project-based learning opportunities appear to help learning in both schools; 2) Students in both schools reported little student choice and voice; 3) When

it comes to time and learning, students in both schools don't want any more time in school, yet report wanting more engaging learning activities that require time; 4) Teacher support is very important to students in both schools; and 5) The ELT school allowed the benefit of real-life application of curriculum, or academic relevancy, more than the non-ELT school. Each thematic area is discussed in more detail below, highlighting examples from the ELT and non-ELT focus groups.

Theme 1: Peer to peer collaboration and project-based learning opportunities appear to help learning.

The opening discussion questions for each focus group was, "What people, teaching approaches or situations do you think help you learn the most?" One student from the non-ELT school stated, "In groups, like if I'm working all by myself I get frustrated because I don't get the concept. But if I'm partnered with someone next to me I can ask them, and I usually end up figuring out what I need to know." Another student in the same focus group indicates that, "if you are in a group and you don't know the answer, someone in your group will probably know". However, another student from the non-ELT school pointed out when asked if students were encouraged to talk with others about a concept that "There are a bunch of signs on the wall that say, 'Ask your partner first, and then your teacher.' But when I would ask my partner or group something, my teacher would always get mad!" Another student from the non-ELT school in the context of explaining why student presentations are a good approach to teaching stated "I like it better when the kids are speaking better than teachers." Another student added "I'm not going to say it's more important, but I personally like watching the kids up there teaching, because the teachers are so dull

and boring...kids are more exciting.” And, still another student in the non-ELT confirmed that from the student perspective it is more engaging when students take a role in teaching each other. She stated, “Yeah, I mean...I pay attention to kids better than teachers because teachers always have the same voice. I can just hear it in my mind, even when they are not talking! Kids at least have a different voice that they use, it’s easier to remember things.” As the students in the non-ELT school discussed why they like group work, projects, and working with other students, there was only one student who gave the viewpoint that for some students, groupwork may not be effective. He stated “It can be good but it can be a distraction because you could be talking to them more than doing actual work.”

While most of the students in the non-ELT school discussed why they would like to see more groupwork and students leading discussions in class, students in the ELT school actually offered examples of pedagogy and assignment where students are listening to other students and engaged in projects together. One student highlighted the Socratic seminar as an example of students talking with students. When asked to describe the Socratic seminar, he said “..And it’s like the class sits in a circle, and you have a topic to discuss about. And, you just say what you have to say about that topic. And the teacher isn’t like involved in it. It’s just the students talking about it. That happens a lot in English class.” Another student in the same focus group further clarified the teacher’s role. “The teacher’s role is basically to come in and calm them down, and tell them to listen to each other to see who’s right. And then sometimes she will tell actually who is right. And then she’ll tell the students to explain why you’re right, and explain that “I am right because,” and we’ll talk it over.”

In another focus group at the ELT school students gave ready examples of activities of engaging learning activities. One student indicated “My science teacher, Ms. X, she ..we have to like learn about food web, and so, she put out a whole bunch of different colored construction paper, and then we had to pretend to be that animal in that part of the food web. And then we all have to go in and say-like I was a hawk and I was going to eat a snake. So I would have to go up to the person and get it, like take their paper or whatever away. And it was fun like that, like one of those things so you could remember”. Another student stated “My social studies teacher, Ms. S, when she had us build the mosques and stuff. And then we had to write a report, and everyone was like in front of the class. And we like all said it, and what we did, and what we think about it. And there was another time when we were all in different groups, and we all had to do reports in the groups we’re in like we were travelling. And then we had this big speech of the new thing. And we learned it that way.”

The students in both the ELT and non-ELT schools discuss group work, peer to peer collaboration, and listening to other students as important to their learning. However, it was the students in the ELT school who gave specific examples of these approaches to teaching and learning in practice. When asked for examples in the non-ELT school, specific stories were not offered; however one student did seem to indicate that student-to-student interaction was actually discouraged.

Theme 2: Students in both schools reported little student choice and voice.

In each focus group in the ELT and non-ELT schools, students report having limited choice and voice in school. When asked if students felt that they had a choice

about what they are learning in the non-ELT school, three students simply stated a one word answer-- "No." Another student in the non-ELT further explained that sometimes a student can pick a topic for a paper, while another student disagreed, "Well, I did that paper and it said you could choose, but we really didn't. They will say you have a choice, but then they alphabetize so if you're at the end someone else does what you want, you don't have much left in there as options." Students also added that there isn't even choice as to where a student sits in the lunch room and that sometimes they are asked their opinions and then don't feel listened to. When asked whether it is still important to give their opinion, students responded, "You tell them, 'I don't like this.' Then they always say, 'Alright, we'll see what we can do.' And, they never do. Nothing changes." Another student from the non-ELT school stated "Why bother? Why waste your breath?" Still another student from a different focus group at the non-ELT school stated, "They seem like they're listening but in the end it's like they're not."

In the ELT school, there seemed to be a similar sentiment among the students as the non-ELT school; however, there were some examples of students having the ability to choose electives and project topics. One student sarcastically said that he did have choice about what to eat at lunch, while still several others pointed out that school uniform policy also limits the choice of what the student can even wear in the morning. Despite the sarcastic sentiments of students in the ELT school around students' choice, there were still several students who gave examples of selecting electives in the expanded learning time block that had meaning and relevance to them.

For example, one student gave an example of why he loved his video production class. He said “It’s your idea, and you get to shoot your ideas.”

The students in both focus groups of the ELT school reported that sometimes they were listened to and other times where they were not. The discussions in the focus groups around student voice and choice were somewhat similar in both the ELT and non-ELT school, with the exception of a few examples of students having choice in electives and project assignments in the ELT school. Students in all the focus groups said they were actually asked their input, but rarely felt listened to.

Theme 3: When it comes to time and learning, students in both schools don’t want any more time in school; yet they report wanting more engaging learning activities that require time.

Not a single student who participated in the focus groups at either school reported either wanting or enjoying a longer school day. The students in the non-ELT school had just recently heard that their school was considering adding 30 minutes per day as part of the school’s improvement plan in the coming year. One student said “Yeah, but that’s only adding four minutes to each class. I don’t think four minutes is anything, it’s nothing.” Another student added, “Yeah, they should add it on to lunch time. I don’t feel like we get enough time to socialize.” Still another student questioned the value of adding 30 minutes to the school day, “I mean, it’s only another four minutes. That’s like, another two minutes outside, and then an extra two minutes for you to get changed. It’s not a big deal. It’s not that much time.”

When the students in the non-ELT focus group were asked what they think about the school planning to add 30 minutes, one student pointed out it was less time

to do homework, essays and projects, and another expressed concern about seeing friends after school. Another student said, “Instead of having four minutes added to a class, they should have 30 minutes added so that you can go get tutoring if you want it. If no, you can go home.”

When students in the ELT school were asked if they felt that they had enough time to meet their learning objectives, one student said it depended on the class, while another student in the same focus group further clarified, “And it depends on what the teacher expects from us. Some teachers kind of—like if they expect a lot from us, they like, rush us sometimes.”

While students in the ELT school also gave examples of still feeling rushed in some classes, most of their comments about the quantity of time were focused on it being too long. One student indicated, “If I had to change something, the long day, the extended day. I like that we have extended day, I just don’t like that it takes like the whole day... So, it’s like a long day. It’s tiring.” Another student indicated that she didn’t believe school should start so early. She stated, “Like some people are really tired and we’re not ready in the morning sometimes.” Another student continued to say, “I’d probably change the time too, but I don’t know how that would work out, because some people have stuff after school, like at 5:00 or 4:30.” Another student from the ELT school expressed mixed feelings about having a longer school day. He said “Like it’s good, but also bad. It depends what day it is, because there are some days, everybody has those days where you don’t want to stay until a certain time. And then everyone has those days where you like your classes and you want to be there. So it has its ups and downs.”

At the end of each focus group, students were asked the one thing they liked best and the one thing that they wanted to change in their respective school. For this question, each student was asked to provide an answer. The students in the ELT school clearly indicated that ELT and the opportunities offered by ELT were what they liked most about their school; however the same number of students in the ELT school also reported that the longer school day or time school starts and ends is what they most want to change in their school (see Tables 9 and 10). In the Non-ELT school, seven of the 13 students could not identify what they like best about their school. The remaining students gave varying responses.

Table 9

Focus group participant responses to the best thing about school

<u>ELT focus group participants (N=18)</u>	<u>Non-ELT focus group participants (N=13)</u>
Opportunities offered by ELT (11)	No response(7)
25 book campaign (3)	Students(2)
Electives (2)	Electives (2)
Interactive classes (2)	Staying after school for tutoring (1)
	Hands-on activities (1)

Table 10

Focus group participant responses to the one thing to change in school

<u>ELT focus group Participants (N=18)</u>	<u>Non-ELT focus group participants (N=13)</u>
Length of school day/time school starts (11)	Should have more after-school support (3)
Timing of advisory (4)	Schedule/Time-Use (2)
Rules/Uniforms (3)	Teachers (2)
	No response (2)
	Rules/Uniform Policy (1)
	Uniforms (1)
	More hands-on in classes(1)
	Too much homework (1)

Theme 4: Teacher support is very important to students in both schools.

Students in both schools discussed the importance of teachers in their learning. They gave examples of what they considered good and bad teaching and teachers, emphasizing the importance of teachers who care about them and support their learning. For example in the non-ELT school, one student said her math teacher was great because she showed students very effective shortcuts. Another provided an example of a science teacher who promoted group discussion and interaction. He said “Yeah, like Mr. A—in science, he has our desks pushed together into groups of four or five. Even if we’re not actually doing a group assignment, I like how we’re always together; we’re always in those groups, so we can ask a question if we need someone to help.”

However, contrary to the most previous example, other students in the non-ELT school reported that teachers do not always give them the support and encouragement they would like. “Our teachers rarely do that.” And another said, “I actually don’t think we’ve ever done that.” Another student in the non-ELT school reported that his teacher tells him he must solve problems the way she shows him rather than coming up with new ways of doing things. Still another student from the non-ELT school described that teachers are dismissive of students’ questions because they want to stay on target with the curriculum.

However, in a different focus-group in the non-ELT school, a student rebutted that her school is in fact different from other schools because of the quality of the teachers. She said the teachers “care about us and want us to do well.” Another student interrupted her and said “A lot of my teachers don’t seem to really care.” And,

another student in the non-ELT school continued the conversation by stating that his biology teacher does care and asks him questions about how he is doing with his learning. The students within the non-ELT school clearly had mixed, individual views on whether or not the teachers cared and supported their learning.

The mixed responses and statements about teachers continued with the other ELT focus groups. There did not appear to be a marked difference in responses across the ELT and non-ELT focus groups. Some students from the ELT school gave examples of teachers and situations where teachers seemed to be interested, invested and caring about them, where others felt the teachers were unfair. Several students in the ELT school also talked about teacher care. One student said “I had a really good teacher who seemed like she really cared about me, and if I had a question or something I was worried about, she’d care. Another stated “The teachers really care here.” In the ELT school, students also talked about specific teachers and teachers being supportive. A student stated “I like math because some of the teachers are very nice. What I like most is when I don’t get stuff, the teacher explains more, and they give me an advantage to learn more. And if I don’t have enough time, they give me more time in extended day English and math.”

The teacher seems to be an important conduit to a student’s feeling of school satisfaction. Students gave specific examples of teachers and classes that they enjoy. And, when students in the ELT focus groups were asked how often strategies like group work and listening to other students is used in class, the answer was “it depends on the teacher.” When the ELT focus group participants were asked if there was a particular teacher or situation that helped them learn best, one student reported “When

you have a certain teacher that will give you-not only criticize you but constructively give it to you in a way that can help you learn it better and do it better” Another student interrupted “And if it’s somebody that encourages questions, and who accepts them and answers them fully.” The first student continued, “And, if they {teachers} ask you questions, make you think deeper and like have that understanding to make you think logically and everything.” A third student added to this discussion that in addition to teachers, students learn from other students. She stated “And, also the people you work with. If you can understand them and they can understand you, you guys can help each other. You can learn from them and they can learn from you.”

The students in both the ELT and non-ELT schools were never specifically asked about teacher support or care. However, the students consistently mentioned teachers in relation to many of the general questions asked about time and learning. Some mentioned positive examples of teachers, while others provided alternate perspectives and negative experiences of teachers. In at least one circumstance, a student gave an example of his connection with a teacher to the question “What do you like best about your school?” He said he liked extended day because it’s different and it allows him to have music. “And I like music. The teacher-the music teacher Ms. X-I dunno, she’s just like the bomb.”

Theme 5: The ELT school allowed the benefit of real-life application of curriculum, or academic relevancy.

A few students in the non-ELT school talked about wanting more hands-on experience; however students didn’t talk about the curriculum in great detail or give examples of how the current curriculum or pedagogical approaches have meaning and

relevance to their lives. In contrast, students in the ELT focus groups mentioned often and in detail that the electives offered in ELT had real world meaning. One student emphasized that having a longer school day allowed for more interaction with the community and taking advantage of non-traditional learning experiences. She said, “They take us places around here. Like for intramural and everything, you go to the boys club, we go to the YMCA, or you go swimming at the place over at the Y, so they take you out of school.” Students emphasized the choice that they receive in selecting their extended time opportunities, “We have choices... Intramurals, cooking, video production.” In one of the ELT focus groups, students were asked “How do you think the expanded learning time has impacted you?” One student reported, “Like some of the lectures, like they can help you in life. Like if you want to take a job in journalism, there are classes in journalism that can help you.” Another student furthered the point, “It kind of gives you an advantage. Like other schools, don’t have that. Like our school, we have intramurals, journalism, video production, and like things like that. And those are going to help you later on...You’re like one step ahead of other kids.” Another student said these electives make coming to school fun and exciting. She says “You get to come to the building and like Hey, guess what I got, like journalism for the yearbook coming up next. I’m so excited for that. Instead of saying Oh I got this next, or whatever. Doesn’t matter to me.”

Another student reported that ELT allows students to explore interests. He stated, “They like help you choose a job. If you really like something, like cooking, if you wanna be, like if you really like it, you might want to go into culinary arts, and you have an advantage now to start early.” A third student also talked about the

curriculum providing an opportunity to do hands on activities and explore interests which have real-world applications. He stated, “But so we got to make a video. So in that class we have it once a week. So you go there and we practice it, and then we film it, and then we get to edit it. And then we get to show it to the school in the pep rally. It’s fun though, because you get to..it’s not hard to start, and...you can do whatever you want, but it still like you learn because you learn about like how to use the camera.” Still, another student talked about ELT having great impact on him because it provided him the opportunity to take robotics and work with machinery.

Time for Learning Survey Findings

The demographics and response rates of the survey respondents is presented in Table 5 within the Methodology section.

As noted in Table 11 below, the only significant difference in respondent demographics between the ELT and non-ELT school is that of Race. Upon more close review of the Chi Square table, the difference between the schools appears to lie in the categories of Asian and Black. No respondents in the ELT school reported Race as Black or Asian, while respondents in the non-ELT school had five respondents self-report Black and eight respondents self-report Asian. However, the ELT school had a higher percentage of students reporting more than one race than students in the non-ELT school. Upon further investigation and recoding of the Race variable to a dichotomous variable White or Minority, or all other races combined, there was no significant difference in the recoded $\chi^2 (1, N = 226) = .161, p = .688$.

Table 11
Pearson Chi Square Results for School by Demographics

Demographic Item	Value	Df	sig
Gender	2.957	1	.085
Free/Reduced Lunch	4.705	2	.095
Race	14.592	6	.024*
Race Recoded	.161	1	.688
Primary At-Home Language	.799	1	.371
Only Middle School Attended?	.061	1	.806

*p<.05. **p<.01

As noted in Table 12, the mean responses by school on each of the scales examined by the *Time for Learning* survey were very similar. The mean of each scale summary score did not vary by more than one standard deviation for any of the scales. Mean results of the ELT (Jones) school were slightly higher than non-ELT (Peterson) on only three (Academic Relevancy, Student Engagement, and Student Choice) of the nine scales. Conversely, the non-ELT (Peterson) school mean responses were slightly higher than the ELT (Jones) school on Academic Rigor, Learning Climate, School Satisfaction, Teacher Support, Peer to Peer Learning, and Time Well Spent. For each of the scales, a higher rating is considered more favorable.

Academic Rigor, or the degree to which the students perceive that teachers have high expectations and standards, was measured on a four point scale, with four being the highest. Students in both the ELT (Jones) school and non-ELT (Peterson) school report a relatively high level of Academic Rigor (ELT M=3.091, non ELT M=3.158).

While the Academic Rigor scale had the highest overall mean in both the ELT (Jones) school and non-ELT (Peterson) school, Student Engagement, or the degree to which youth report that they find school fun and exciting, look forward to learning new things at school, and look forward to going to school, had the lowest mean of the scales measured in both schools (ELT $M=1.869$, non-ELT $M=1.681$). Student Engagement was measured on a 3 point scale with 3 being the highest.

Table 12

Descriptive statistics and univariate results for Time for Learning scales by school

Scale	Mean	SD	N	F	sig
<u>Academic Relevancy</u>				3.052	.082
ELT	2.861	.634	98		
Non-ELT	2.719	.571	125		
<u>Academic Rigor</u>				.886	.347
ELT	3.091	.584	98		
Non-ELT	3.158	.484	125		
<u>Learning Climate</u>				.019	.890
ELT	2.870	.630	98		
Non-ELT	2.881	.541	125		
<u>School Satisfaction</u>				.253	.616
ELT	2.118	.438	98		
Non-ELT	2.146	.395	125		
<u>Student Engagement</u>				7.138	.008**
ELT	1.869	.548	98		
Non-ELT	1.681	.498	125		
<u>Teacher Support</u>				.793	.374
ELT	2.934	.627	98		
Non-ELT	3.000	.486	125		
<u>Peer to Peer Learning</u>				1.304	.255
ELT	2.959	.671	98		
Non-ELT	3.052	.543	125		
<u>Student Choice</u>				.806	.370
ELT	2.677	.722	98		
Non-ELT	2.593	.663	125		
<u>Time Well Spent</u>				1.540	.216
ELT	2.737	.636	98		
Non-ELT	2.843	.624	125		

* $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$

In looking more closely at the individual items which comprise the nine scales of the *Time for Learning* survey, only nine individual items of the 51 items on the

survey have significant differences between the responses of the ELT (Jones) and non-ELT (Peterson) schools when applying the independent samples T-test (See Table 13). For descriptive statistics and t results of all individual items, see Appendix 5.

Four of the nine individual items with significant differences by school were found within the School Satisfaction scale. Those in the non-ELT (Peterson) school were more likely to agree that they get along well with others at school ($M=2.54$) than students in the ELT (Jones) school ($M=2.29$) $t(224) = -3.348, p = .001$. Similarly, those in the non-ELT (Peterson) school were more likely to agree that they feel close to other students at their school ($M=2.30$) than students in the ELT (Jones) school ($M=2.04$) $t(222) = -2.932, p = .004$. And, those in the non-ELT (Peterson) school were more likely to agree that they are getting a good education at their school ($M=2.41$) than students in the ELT (Jones) school ($M=2.23$) $t(221) = -2.133, p = .034$. Conversely, students in the ELT (Jones) school were significantly more likely to agree that they are happy to attend their school ($M=2.09$) than student in the non-ELT (Peterson) school ($M=1.80$) $t(223) = 3.047, p = .003$. While students in the ELT (Jones) school were more likely to agree, the overall mean responses of both scores was quite low, indicating students in both schools did not feel strongly that they were getting a good education.

Two of the nine individual items where significant differences existed are items within the Student Engagement scale. Items on the Student Engagement scale were measured on a three point scale. Students in the ELT (Jones) school were more likely to agree that they find school fun and exciting ($M=1.75$) than students in the non-ELT (Peterson) school ($M=1.53$) $t(224) = 2.537, p = .012$. Students in the ELT (Jones)

school were less likely to agree that they are often bored at school ($M=1.83$) than students in the non-ELT (Peterson) school ($M=1.59$) $t(224)=2.508$, $p=.013$. Please note that this individual item was reverse-coded.

Students in the ELT (Jones) school were more likely to report that their teachers encourage them to talk to other adults about jobs and careers ($M=2.60$) than students in the non-ELT (Peterson) school ($M=2.27$) $t=2.970$, $p=.003$. Students in the ELT (Jones) school were also more likely to report that they have choices about what they learn in school ($M=2.55$) than students in the non-ELT (Peterson) school ($M=2.27$) $t=2.112$, $p=.036$. Finally, students in the non-ELT (Peterson) school were more likely to report that the school day is just the right amount of time ($M=2.90$) than students in the ELT (Jones) school ($M=2.49$) $t=-3.058$, $p=.003$.

Table 13

Select individual item statistics by school

Item (Scale Source)	Mean	SD	N	T	sig
<u>I get along well with others at school (School Satisfaction)</u>				-3.348	.001**
ELT	2.29	.638	101		
Non-ELT	2.54	.516	125		
<u>I feel close to other students at this school (School Satisfaction)</u>				-2.932	.004**
ELT	2.04	.662	101		
Non-ELT	2.30	.664	123		
<u>I am getting a good education at this school (School Satisfaction)</u>				-2.133	.034*
ELT	2.23	.667	99		
Non-ELT	2.41	.585	124		
<u>I am happy that I attend this school (School Satisfaction)</u>				3.047	.033*
ELT	2.09	.712	100		
Non-ELT	1.80	.707	125		
<u>I find school fun and exciting (Student Engagement)</u>				2.537	.012*
ELT	1.75	.699	101		
Non-ELT	1.53	.630	125		
<u>I am often bored at school (Student Engagement)</u>				2.508	.013*
ELT	1.83	.749	101		
Non-ELT	1.59	.685	125		
<u>My teachers encourage me to talk to other adults about jobs and careers (Academic Relevancy)</u>				2.970	.003**
ELT	2.60	.856	99		
Non-ELT	2.27	.797	124		
<u>The school day is just the right amount of time (Time Well Spent)</u>				-3.058	.003**
ELT	2.49	.991	97		
Non-ELT	2.90	.987	125		
<u>I have choices about what I learn in school (Student Choice)</u>				2.112	.036*
ELT	2.55	.911	99		
Non-ELT	2.27	.997	124		

*p<.05. **p<.01

A one-way MANOVA was calculated examining the effect of school (ELT or non-ELT) on students' reports of Academic Relevancy, Academic Rigor, Learning Climate, School Satisfaction, Student Engagement, Teacher Support, Peer to Peer

Learning, Student Choice, and Time Well Spent. A significant effect was found, Lambda (9,213)=.888, $p=.002$. This represents a small but significant effect (Eta Squared = .112), and large observed power of .967 (See Table 14). Just over 11% of the variance in the outcome measures is the result of the extended school day. The large sample size made it possible to detect a relatively small, but significant effect.

Table 14

Wilks' Lambda Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) Summary

Source	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
School Effect	.888	2.98 0	9	213	.002**	.112	.967

** $p < 0.01$

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated that students in the ELT school scored significantly higher than students in the non-ELT school on the Student Engagement scale, $F(1,221) = 7.138$, $p=.008$. As illustrated in Table 12, of the other univariate analyses examined (effect of school on Academic Relevancy, Academic Rigor, Learning Climate, School Satisfaction, Student Engagement, Teacher Support, Peer to Peer Learning, Student Choice, and Time Well Spent), none demonstrated significant difference at the .05 level, although one scale, Academic Relevancy ($p=.082$), approached statistical significance.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Research in higher education has shown that student engagement and satisfaction increase when the classroom and learning environments reflect a commitment to student learning and engagement (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006). The Expanded Learning Time Reform, a reform designed to add 30% more time to the school day and transform the way time is used in schools, is a reform effort in Massachusetts designed to improve student achievement in some of the most chronically underperforming schools. Reforms of this nature often fail to include students' perspectives and voice during the development. This study examined the following research questions:

1. What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School?
 - a. What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time?
2. How do these experiences and attitudes toward learning compare to students in a non-ELT school?
3. What are principals' beliefs related to time and learning?
 - a. Are the principals' beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students' reported experiences?

To investigate Research Questions 1 and 1a focus groups of 8th grade students from the ELT school were conducted, followed by a survey of the population of 8th graders in the ELT school.

Overall students seem to have mixed attitudes toward time in relation to their learning. When it comes to time and learning, ELT students don't want any more time in school, yet they report valuing engaging learning activities that require time.

Students in the ELT School reported in the focus groups that they enjoy hands-on activities, electives, and opportunities offered in the expanded learning time school. Students are excited about going to school to participate in activities that interest and engage them. The students from the ELT school provided vibrant examples of real-life application of curriculum; details of pedagogy including project-based learning, enjoying peer to peer interaction, and specific teachers who promote peer to peer learning along with electives with real world application and meaning. Students were very clear that they enjoyed these types of teaching approaches and the opportunity to have electives which excited and engaged them in their learning. However, students also indicated that they dislike having a school day that is so long and less time out of school for friends.

Strikingly, students in the ELT school reported that expanded learning time was both the thing that they liked most about their school and the one thing that they wished to change in their school. The results of the Time Well Spent scale of the *Time for Learning* survey seem to confirm the ELT students mixed attitudes toward time. The ELT student mean (M=2.737) on the Time for Learning scale straddles disagree (2) and agree (3), meaning students were lukewarm on reporting that time is

effectively utilized. Students in the ELT school reported most favorable agreement with items on the Academic Rigor scale, or the degree to which the students perceive that teachers have high expectations and standards for their learning. The focus groups and survey results seem to confirm that students in the ELT school feel that teachers are critical to their learning. Teachers provide creative pedagogies, set high and consistent standards, and ask questions that make them think.

In examining research question 1A, students' perceived effects of expanded learning time, the data did not yield a strong or overwhelming indication to this question. While students were asked in the focus groups how expanded learning time had impacted them, students gave examples of the time of the day interrupting their plans or afterschool commitments or the time they rise in the morning. Alternatively, they gave examples of how the school used expanded learning time to add electives such as Robotics, video production, or other activities that they look forward to participating in. Perhaps, a deeper probing of focus group participants or subsequent focus groups may have been useful to elucidate deeper connections and descriptions from students. The survey which followed the focus groups also fell short of really addressing this particular research question completely. The survey gives a comparison in relation to a comparison school as addressed in research question 2, but doesn't address specifically the effect of ELT on the students.

To answer the second research question, How do these experiences and attitudes toward learning compare to students in a non-ELT school? , focus groups and the *Time for Learning* Survey were also implemented in a similar comparison non-ELT school

After finishing the focus groups in both the ELT and non-ELT school, there were apparent themes that ran across both the schools with few glaring differences between the ELT and non-ELT school except that ELT students talked much more frequently and gave more frequent examples of experiencing a curriculum that was fun and engaging and relevant to their lives. They gave examples of wanting to go to school to partake in electives and fun hands-on experiences. The students in the non-ELT school talked about wanting these experiences, but couldn't share examples of it happening in the classroom.

The *Time for Learning* survey was then employed to explore whether there were any school differences between participants on the following scales: Academic Relevancy, Academic Rigor, Learning Climate, School Satisfaction, Student Engagement, Teacher Support, Peer to Peer Learning, Student Choice, and Time Well Spent. A MANOVA indicated an overall effect. Students in the ELT school had significantly different perspectives than students in the non-ELT school. However, the only scale to achieve significance at the .05 level was Student Engagement. Students in the ELT school scored significantly higher than the students in the non-ELT school on the Student Engagement scale of the SSP. Student Engagement, as defined by the SSP, is the degree that youth find school fun and exciting, look forward to learning new things at school, and look forward to going to school. School appears to be more fun and interesting in the school with the longer day. This is an important finding as many studies have suggested that increased student engagement and school connectedness is linked with student achievement.

One individual survey item difference which is interesting to note is students in the non-ELT (Peterson) school were more likely to report that the school day is just the right amount of time ($M=2.90$) than students in the ELT (Jones) school ($M=2.49$) $t=-3.058$, $p=.003$. Focus group comments seemed to give a possible rationale for this difference. First, students in the non-ELT school reported in the focus groups that they recently learned that their school was considering an expansion of the school day and the non-ELT focus group students did not see value or want a longer school day. Second, the ELT focus group participants reported that school was just too long.

The focus group data seemed to indicate a noticeable difference in the real world application of the curriculum between the ELT and non-ELT students, yet the subsequent survey did not yield a significant difference on the Academic Relevancy scale. At $p=.08$, the Academic Relevancy scale approached, but did not meet significance. Perhaps the students in the focus groups at the ELT school were disproportionately very enthusiastic and engaged students and not reflective of the larger population which may explain the disconnect between the qualitative and quantitative data. Or, rather the Academic Relevancy scale of the survey instrument measured something more broad than the construct extrapolated from the focus group responses. The focus group responses were focused on specific curriculum topics and teachers while the Academic Relevancy scale is comprised of several items that asked more generally of students what teachers collectively do. Students may have given lower ratings on scale items about “teachers” because of a bad experience with one teacher.

Yet, it seems that there may be a relationship between the use of ELT as a reform strategy to increase academic relevancy of the curriculum and student engagement to be explored further. More time may have provided curriculum with more hands-on and real world connections. Students who experience curriculum which connects to their interests and the real-world may then be more engaged and successful in school.

To examine research questions 3 and 3a, the principal of the ELT school and the vice-principal of the non-ELT school were interviewed to explore their beliefs on time and learning. The students' focus group data and survey responses were used to examine whether the principal's beliefs related to time and learning were reflected in the students' reported experiences.

The ELT principal clearly articulated her belief about time and learning when she said "if you have more time and still have terrible teaching, then it's just more terrible teaching". She highlighted project-based learning as one type of creative, pedagogical approach needed to engage students. She emphasized that more time doesn't equal more learning or equal better learning. Time needs to be effectively utilized through innovative new pedagogies including allowing time for hands-on, project-based learning that engages youth. The students in the ELT focus groups clearly echoed the principal's sentiments. The students talked about the expanded learning time allowing for new electives and more hands on and student-centered approaches to learning. The students didn't like being in school longer, but they valued the experiences they were getting from the enhanced curriculum and teaching.

The leadership in the comparison, non-ELT school has not had the same consistency as the ELT school. There has been a new principal each year for the last

four years. These eighth grade students have known three different leaders, while the students in the ELT school have experienced the same leadership throughout their three years in middle school. The leader interviewed for this study had most recently served as interim principal in 2009-2010 and in the 2010-2011 school year and as assistant principal. Late into the implementation of the survey phase of the study, she left the district all together. During her interview, she had more difficulty describing the relationship between time and learning. She described the relationship of time and learning as the way time is effectively ‘managed’ in the classroom to focus on student-centered activities. Essentially she discussed time on task activities as opposed to academic learning time activities. She reported there was enough time in the day and that the time just needed to be managed effectively. The non-ELT school was clearly in a time of transition and scrutiny. It had been declared a level four school and was writing a school improvement plan to be implemented in January of 2011 which included about 30 minutes more time in the school day.

The vice-principal discussed the frustration in not having the resources of implementing the proposed plan. While the ELT school receives about \$1,000,000 per year to pay teachers more for a longer day and to try creative curriculum, this school would only receive \$129,000. In addition to the lack of resources from the City and State, the leader talked about the students’ and parents’ lack of involvement and social issues as a major contributor to the school’s issues. The leadership seemed to be placing the blame of the school’s poor performance on external factors that are not in the immediate control of the school personnel, while, conversely, the ELT school leader discussed the importance of internal factors such as high expectation of

teachers, creative pedagogies, engaging curriculum as prime contributors to positive school performance.

The students' perspectives about time and learning in the non-ELT school were similar to the vice-Principal's. Students did not think more time was needed. While the vice-principal discussed student-centered approaches to learning in the classroom where students take a role in leading instruction, the students' focus group responses did not mirror the vice-principal's descriptions. Students in the non-ELT focus groups talked about having limited choice in their learning and limited opportunities to interact with each other in school. For example, a student said that while there are signs on the wall encouraging students to talk to partners, students are often discouraged to do so. Students said they are even limited to talking with peers at lunch or sitting with their preferred friend group. They report that they feel they are not listened to. In fact at the conclusion of one of the focus groups, one young man asked the researcher if she could come back every week because he enjoyed being able to have a conversation with an adult who listened to what he said.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. As mentioned earlier, participant selection in focus groups was less than ideal. Those that volunteer for this type of research may have been the students who are already some of the more engaged students in the school. Recruitment was difficult and very few students brought back informed consent forms for the focus groups in either school. As such, the number of focus groups was reduced from three to two in both schools, which

veered from the investigator's initial plan to triangulate the patterns in the data in both schools from three different groups.

Nevertheless, there were 13 students in the non-ELT school and 18 participants in the ELT school which is far more perspectives that may have been obtained with the use of individual interviews. While the focus group format allowed for students to build off of each other's thoughts, there may have been students who did not say what they would have said if alone. So, while focus groups provided more perspectives, it did not allow for deep perspectives. Students described the effects of time and learning in superficial terms, in relation to concrete schedule and curriculum changes. This might imply that the effect of time in learning is merely superficial to students. However, research question 1a may have been better addressed by individual interviews which allowed for deeper perspectives about the effects of time on the individual student's learning. Perhaps with more thorough follow up, additional questioning may have gleaned students' perspectives more thoroughly.

In relation to the *Time for Learning* survey, there are also several limitations to consider. Most of the scales from the *Time for Learning* survey scales were taken from a validated instrument, the School Success Profile (SSP); however, three scales were researcher-developed and not piloted prior to implementation. While a well-validated tool used for assessment of social work interventions and risk assessment in middle and high schools, the SSP was not designed for studies that examine an educational reform. The scales were developed by social workers, not educators, and while very useful, caution must be used in interpreting the results by educators. The Cronbach Alpha test for internal consistency demonstrated very strong internal

consistency for eight of the nine survey scales, and moderate consistency for the researcher-developed Student Choice scale. Construct validity appears to be strong on its face, but some may question if the terms used for the constructs are the best terms to capture the items in the scale.

The implementation of the *Time for Learning* Survey was not as consistent in each of the schools as had been desired. A number of “real world” issues occurred which caused implementation to vary among the schools. Both schools implemented the survey during an advisory period at the same time of year (after MCAS implementation but before the end of the school year). While efforts were made to time implementation on the same day or same week, this did not occur. The contact in the non-ELT school took a leave of absence and a new contact had to be found. Eventually, a call to the superintendent’s office was made the week before school ended to plead that the school implement the survey as planned. Each school handled their own implementation. While the researcher gave instructions and suggestions on how to consistently implement the surveys, it is unknown if every step was followed. Ideally, the researcher would have coordinated survey implementation herself; however, the schools did not allow for this to occur.

The implementation variations may have impacted the response rate. While the response rate was very good in each school and the survey was anonymous, the fact that the advisory teacher was in the room and passed out and collected the surveys may have led some students to refuse to fill out the survey for fear that the teacher would read their respective answers. And, in a study that examines students’

perspectives, it would be very interesting to know the thoughts and perspectives and rationale for the non-completers.

In respect to the leadership interviews, the principal of the ELT school provided a focused and thorough interview while the vice-principal in the non-ELT school seemed to provide a more scattered interview. The vice-principal was the best leader to speak with in the school given her recent post as interim principal; however, she wasn't very committed to the study. District administration encouraged her participation and she complied. However, the interview may not have accurately captured her thoughts on time and learning or the overall philosophy of the school. Perhaps, additional select teacher and administrator interviews might have helped to understand the school more deeply; however, time and resources prevented this from occurring. It does seem clear that the leadership at this school was much more tenuous and unfocused than the charismatic and visionary leadership in the ELT school.

While internal reliability appears strong in this study, a substantial limitation of this study is external reliability, or generalizability. Caution must be used in extrapolating the results to other school districts. The results are not generalizable outside of the case school district. Context is a critical factor in this case and must be taken into consideration in extending findings to other contexts.

Recommendations for Further Study

A critical question to be considered for further studies is “does a school actually need 30% more time to reshape the learning environment in the way that Jones transformed their curriculum and pedagogy?” The school has turned itself around

from one of the worst schools in the state to a school that has a waiting list to get in. There are many factors that likely contribute to this turnaround beginning with having for the first time in fifty years a principal who while admittedly is “abrupt”, is consistent and set high expectations of teachers and students. Another likely contributor may be a curriculum that allows for electives and exploration of student interest connected to the academic standards, a very good example of effectively using academic learning time.

Data from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) indicate that students in the ELT school have higher test scores, as measured by the MCAS, than the students in the non-ELT on mathematics and science and technology tests. This study did not address test performance. And, while other studies have looked at the relationship of time and student achievement, more studies need to examine the relationship of time, student achievement, and student engagement, particularly as the number of middle schools across the country ponder using variations of time as a reform element.

In general, there seems to be a gap in the literature of studies examining student engagement at the middle school level. Further studies that examine the construct of student engagement in the middle school are warranted. First, there is not a wide consensus on the definition of student engagement in middle school. Second, there are very few assessment tools available for measuring engagement. And, without a solid theoretical definition and measurement tools, the concept will continue to be nebulous and under-examined, when indeed the construct might very well be the most promising conduit to student success.

Finally, future studies need to continue to gather student views and perspectives as a source of data in looking at what is happening in schools, particularly when examining reforms designed to impact students. Students have much to say. Students in the focus groups said that even when they were asked for their input about changes in their school, they rarely felt listened to. In the words of one student “They {school administration} seem like they’re listening but in the end... it’s like they’re not.”

Conclusions

This study leaves as many questions as it does answers. The goal was to listen to and capture students’ perspectives about time and learning in a school that implemented the ELT whole school reform and to compare those perspectives to students in a similar school within the same district. The results of this study cannot be generalized outside of the Small City School District as context plays a critical role in school reform. However, the study does paint a picture of the ELT reform, Small City, and the students and leaders in both schools which may prove very useful for other districts considering implementing similar reforms. Particularly interesting is the role and relationship between time, student engagement and academic relevancy. This study shows that students in the school with the longer school day reported that the additional time allowed for more engaging, hands-on and real world applications of their work. And, the survey data show that students in the ELT school report that school is more fun and engaging than do students in the non-ELT school. This is an important finding since research in higher education has shown that student engagement is positively related to students’ academic success (Carini, Kuh, & Klein,

2006). However, it is unclear how much more time would be needed to see a difference in student engagement, or if time is really the critical factor in the difference. Perhaps reforming the curriculum and pedagogies in the same length of time and with strong visionary leadership would also lead to students reporting that school is more fun, relevant, and engaging.

The relationship between time and learning from a student perspective is much deeper than merely the adult-held “more is better” paradigm. In fact, students said more time in school was very inconvenient, annoying, and interrupted or eliminated their after-school activities and social life. Students certainly do not perceive that more time is better, yet students in the ELT school reported valuing the kinds of activities that were available to them and being more engaged in school.

NCLB and standards-based reforms of the last two decades have squeezed out enrichment activities in underperforming schools to focus on content-based instruction and improved test performance. Contrary to this practice, findings from this study support the literature on academic learning time and Kearsley and Shneiderman’s engagement theory. That is, schools need to maximize academic learning time, the time which students are engaged and covering content. Engagement theory suggests that engaged learning occurs when learning activities 1) take place in a group context, 2) are project-based, and 3) have an outside focus. The focus group responses and students’ responses on the *Time for Learning* survey support the practice of strategically using enrichment activities, project-based learning, student to student interaction, and other creative pedagogical approaches to connect and integrate content with real world application. These real-world, project-based, hands-on

approaches seem to make school interesting and engaging to middle schoolers. Stripping the curriculum of enrichment and creative pedagogical approaches to focus on drilling content will likely disengage students in the long run.

Practitioners who read this study may ask, “What does this study tell us about ELT as a reform effort?” Over the last fifty years, research has shown that a full day of kindergarten is better than a half day, that block scheduling has some advantages when used effectively, and that by spending more time on learning activities students can achieve higher test scores. However, simply extending the day is not necessarily going to create success. The true success in expanding learning time is redesigning how that time is used. Expanding learning time is a strategy that when used effectively and in combination with strong, consistent leadership, and creative, engaging pedagogies might be valuable. However time is only one piece of the equation. Obviously time is needed for learning to occur, but it is the teachers, administrators, and students who either masterfully maximize it, marginally fill it, or squander it.

In relation to school reform, Larry Cuban (2008) has said “Money doesn’t make a difference. People do. Spending more is less important than strategically redirecting existing funds to promote staff performance”. If what Cuban says rings true in relation to time and learning reforms, then we should be more focused on redistributing and reconstructing the time we have to make it as effective as possible. Time doesn’t make or ensure the difference in underperforming schools. Engaged teachers and students do.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Consent Document and Principal Interview Protocol

CONSENT DOCUMENT

Rhode Island College

Time for Learning: Examining students' perceptions toward learning in Expanded Learning Time reform

You are being asked to participate in a research study about perspectives toward the Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the principal of a middle school within a district which has implemented ELT in some schools. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

Kris Monahan, a doctoral student of Education in the Joint PhD Program in Education at University of Rhode Island/ Rhode Island College is conducting this study in partial fulfillment of her degree requirement.

Background Information

The purpose of this research is to understand students' experiences, perceptions and attitudes in Massachusetts' Expanded Learning Time Initiative by examining the following primary research questions: What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School? What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time? How do these experiences and attitudes compare to students in a non-ELT school?

Sub questions to be explored include: What are principals' beliefs related to time and learning? Are the principals' beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students' reported experiences?

Procedures

If you agree to be a participant in this research, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Schedule a time to participate in a 45 minute individual interview with the researcher
- Participate, at a time convenient to you, in your office, or other location in the school you deem fit, an interview
- Answer a short semi-structured list of questions related to your beliefs about the relationship of time and learning, which will be audiotaped

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate in this research, there will be no negative consequences to your employment. Also, you can change your mind about participating at any time with no negative consequences. Choosing not to participate or changing your mind will not affect your relationship or standing with Fall River Public Schools.

Risks and Benefits to Being in the Study

The risks of participating in this research are minimal, meaning that they are about the same as what you would experience in your normal daily activities. There are no direct benefits to you, although the information collected may help us to understand how students and principals think about time and learning and a longer school day.

_____ Initial here to indicate that you have read and understood this page.

Confidentiality

The records of this research will be kept private. In any sort of report that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. The name of the school and school district will also be kept confidential. Research records will be kept in a secured file, and access will be limited to the researcher, the Rhode Island College review board responsible for protecting human participants, and regulatory agencies. All data will be kept for no longer than five years, but at least three years, after which it will be destroyed.

Contacts and Questions

The researcher conducting this study is Kris A. Monahan. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact her at 781 283-2508 (work) 508 673-6082 (home) kmonahan@wellesley.edu. You can also contact her advisor :

Susan Gracia, PhD

Director of Assessment, Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Associate Professor, Educational Leadership Program

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Rhode Island College

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If the researcher cannot be reached, or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher about (1) your rights as a research participant, (2) research-related injuries or problems, or (3) other issues/concerns you have about your participation in this study, please contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at IRB@ric.edu, or by phone (401-456-8228), or by writing, Chair, IRB; c/o Office of Research and Grants Administration; Roberts Hall; Rhode Island College; 600 Mount Pleasant Avenue; Providence.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read and understand the above information, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time with no negative consequences. I have received answers to the questions I asked, or I will contact the researcher with any future questions that arise. I am at least 18 years of age.

Print Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

I understand and agree to my interview being audiotaped. _____ Initials

Time for Learning: Examining students' perceptions toward learning in Expanded Learning Time reform

Principal Interview Protocol

Prior to the implementation of the student focus groups, a 45-minute semi-structured interview will be conducted of the principals of the select middle schools focused on the following questions:

1. Tell me a bit about yourself. How long have you been a principal at this school?
 - a. How do you describe your leadership and management style?
2. What is the structure of the school day?
 - a. Is there enough time in the current schedule to meet student learning objectives?
3. What do you believe is the relationship between time and learning?
 - a. Discuss the relationship of quantity and quality of time in relation to learning
4. In what ways are students engaged in making decisions about their learning within this school?

Follow up questions will be focused on elucidating specific examples. The results of these interviews will be used to examine the sub-research questions: What are principals' beliefs related to time and learning, and, ? Are the principals' beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students' reported experiences?

Prior to beginning interview: Purpose of study/research questions are reviewed and informed consent is obtained

Concluding interview: Principals are thanked for their time. Principals are informed that they will be re-contacted at the end of study to debrief on study impressions and to ask principals to assist in making sense of the themes which emerge from the data collection.

APPENDIX 2

Student Recruitment Flyer, Consent Document, and Focus Group Protocol

I want to know what kids think.

Sometimes decisions are made about school without asking kids what they think. I believe that what kids think and say is very important.

I am looking for students who want to help me understand:

What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School like REDACTED SCHOOL NAME? How do these experiences and attitudes compare to students in Talbot, which has a shorter school day?

What will I have to do? Instead of going to the cafeteria at lunch one day, you will join me, Kris Monahan, a student at the University of Rhode Island/Rhode Island College, and about 5 other students to talk about what you think about time and learning in a classroom within your school. We will talk for about 30 minutes and I will audiotape your answers. I will bring pizza for lunch, or you can bring your own lunch if you prefer.

But, I don't know the answers. There are no right and wrong answers. This is not a test. I just want to know what all types of kids think about time and learning. I do not think that any of the questions will make you feel bad. However, you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. You can change your mind once we start and go back to the cafeteria without getting in any trouble.

What will you do with my answers? Your answers will be kept confidential. Confidential means I will not use your name when I write up my report. I won't even use the name of the school when I write up my report. I will not let anyone else, except my advisor, hear the audiotape. The audiotape will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

How do I sign up? If you are willing to volunteer, bring this flyer and the attached parent consent form home. Have your parent/guardian sign and return to your home room teacher by XX/XX/XX. I will select up to 24 students from the group of students who return the attached form to participate in one of the three focus groups in your school. You will receive a pass in homeroom to join the focus group if you are selected.

What if I have questions? You can call me Kris Monahan, on my cell phone at REDACTED or you can send me an e-mail at kmonahan@wellesley.edu.

CONSENT DOCUMENT

Rhode Island College

Time for Learning: Examining students' perceptions toward learning in Expanded Learning Time reform

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study about student's views toward expanded learning time, or a longer school day. Your child is an eighth grader at REDACTED (CIRCLE ONE) Middle School and has expressed an interest in giving his/her opinion about a longer school day or time and learning. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing for your child to participate.

Kris Monahan, a student in the joint Rhode Island College/University of Rhode Island Ph.D. program is conducting this study, under the supervision of her advisor Dr. Susan Gracia.

Background Information

The purpose of this research is to understand what students think and say about a longer school day and about learning by talking to 8th grade students in REDACTED Middle School (which has a longer school day) and 8th grade students at REDACTED Middle School (which has a regular 6 hour day).

Procedures

If your child agrees to be in this research, we would ask him/her to do the following things:

1. Your child would join a group of five or six 8th graders for one "focus group". A focus group is a group interview.
2. Your child will be asked to talk with the researcher and other students about the school day and about learning. Your child will be asked questions to understand what kids think about a longer school day, what happens during the school day, and what teachers do to support their learning.
3. The interview would take place during a lunch period in an empty classroom within REDACTED (CIRCLE ONE) Middle School. Pizza will be provided, however your child can bring his/her own lunch instead.
4. Your child's answers will be audio-taped using a tape recorder. The tapes will be stored in the researcher's locked file cabinet. Your child's name will be kept confidential. Confidential means that his/her name will not be used in any reports. Even the school name will be kept confidential.

Risks and Benefits to Being in the Study

We do not think anything bad will happen to your child if he/she participates. If your child expresses problems within school or reports having problems in school, your child will be referred to the guidance or school adjustment counselor. The benefits of the study is that school administrators and policy makers will better understand how school reforms or changes to the school day impact students by listening to what students have to say.

Confidentiality

The records of this research will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. The school name will also not be used in the report. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and access will be limited to the researcher, and the college review board responsible for protecting human participants. The original data, including audiotapes, will be destroyed within five years. The audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of Kris Monahan at Wellesley College.

Must my child participate?

Your child's participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the REDACTED Public Schools. There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not participating. Students who start the focus group, but decide to leave can return to the lunch room without getting in any trouble.

Contacts and Questions

The researcher conducting this study is *Kris A. Monahan, under the supervision of her PhD advisor Dr. Susan Gracia*. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact them at Kris Monahan kmonahan@wellesley.edu (781) 283-2508 or Susan Gracia (401) 456-8577.

If the researcher cannot be reached, or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher about (1) concerns regarding this study, (2) research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects issues, please contact please contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at IRB@ric.edu, or by phone (401-456-8228), or by writing, Chair, IRB; c/o Office of Research and Grants Administration; Roberts Hall; Rhode Island College; 600 Mount Pleasant Avenue; Providence.

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Permission Statement:

I have read this Permission Form. My signature below means that I understand the information and agree to give permission for my child to participate in this study. I am over 18 years of age, and either the parent or legal guardian of the child. I understand that the focus group will be audio-taped and give permission for my child to be audio-taped.

Child's name: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____ Date: _____

***Time for Learning: Examining students' perceptions toward learning in
Expanded Learning Time reform***

Three focus groups of 8th grade students in each of the middle schools will be conducted. The focus groups will be used to develop themes related to the research questions: What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School? What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time? How do these experiences and attitudes compare to students in a non-ELT school? The advantage to focus groups over individual interviews is that they are efficient in terms of time and often helpful to encourage interaction among peers and enhance a deeper discussion among adolescents.

Student Focus Group Protocol

General Format adapted from Galen, Hare, Noblit (1988) in *the Art of Interviewing Kids: The Group Interview*, paper prepared for the American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting

- I. **Introduce self, purpose of focus group, why here today. And-read child assent statement**
My name is Kris Monahan, and I am doing a study to learn about what kids think about time and learning. We are here to do a focus group, or group interview to talk with other kids and with me about a longer school day. Each of you have already provided a parents' permission slip and they said it is okay for you to participate if you want to. If you have changed your mind, you can say "No" now or at any time and nobody will be upset at you and nothing bad will happen. I will not tell any other adults what we talk about. There is only one thing that I would have to share with someone else, and that is if I think you are in danger for any reason. I will talk with you first before I talk to anyone else so that we can talk about what I thought happened and who I need to share the information with. I wanted to let you know that this might happen if you tell the group that kind of information. Do you understand that? So, like I said earlier, you don't have to do this if you don't want to and nobody will be upset. Does anyone have any questions about the study? Is everyone ready to begin?

- II. **Set the task:** This is a focus group. It is commonly used in marketing research to understand if people like certain products. Today we are using the focus group interview to understand what students think about their learning, especially in relation to time. I am doing three focus groups in two different schools in REDACTED with 8th graders. I will not share your names with your teachers or principals. I will use the words that use to describe your thoughts and feelings about time and learning. **(FOR STUDENTS IN EXPANDED LEARNING TIME SCHOOL ADD→ I want to know what you think about having a much longer school day)**
- III. **Rules of the Focus Group Interview**
- Everyone will be asked to speak.
 - No one must speak.
 - I want to know what you think even if you disagree with someone's opinion, so please tell us.
 - While I want to hear your opinion if it is different, arguments, name-calling or other disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.
 - Please speak loud and clear as I will be audiotaping your responses. I will then keep the tapes locked up and listen to them to transcribe, or write down, what you said to have an accurate record.
 - You can return to the cafeteria if at any time you want to stop participating. I will give you a hall pass to go directly to the cafeteria.
- IV. **Orientation Questions**
- Do you know how you got here?
- Answer: You volunteered and your parent/guardian agreed. Initially a random selection, then purposive to get a diverse group.
- V. **Conduct Interview**
- Start with these broad questions and use open-ended follow ups to elucidate specific examples and stories in the students' words.**
- What is learning?
 - How do you know that you have learned something?
 - What people, situations, or approaches help you learn most?
 - Do you have enough time to meet your learning objectives?
 - For students in Expanded Learning Time School Only:** How do you perceive the expanded learning time has impacted you?

VI. After asking all the questions in Section V. ask: Is there anything else you want to tell me? (make eye contact to each student, take time for response)

VII. Conclusion/Debrief

If we talked about anything that raised any questions or you feel bothered by anything, you should talk to your guidance or school adjustment counselor.

Thank you for taking the time to tell me your thoughts and feelings today.

You are helping me understand how kids view time and learning.

APPENDIX 3

Parent Letter and *Time for Learning* survey

Time for Learning Survey

PARENT/GUARDIAN NOTICE

8th grade students at NAME OF SCHOOL will be asked to fill out a Time for Learning Survey. This will be done in the next week. Please read the information below and let CONTACT NAME know if you do not want your child to participate.

What is the Time for Learning Survey?

This survey is about your child's beliefs about school and teachers. We need to know more about what makes students successful at school. We also want to know what students think about time and learning.

Who is conducting this survey?

Kris Monahan, a PhD student at the University of Rhode Island/Rhode Island College, is conducting this study. Her advisor is Dr. Susan Gracia. The study has been approved by Rhode Island College's Institutional Review Board. You can contact Ms. Monahan with any questions about the study. Her number is (774) 526-9556.

What will my child do?

Your child will fill out a brief survey. It should take about 15 minutes. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

Must my child participate?

No. Your child's participation is voluntary. Your child can say no on the day of the survey. Or you can call Ms.XXXXX if you do not want your child to fill out the survey.

Who will see my child's answers?

Only Ms. Monahan and her advisor will see the completed surveys. Adults at the school, such as the principal, will see only a summary of the answers. The summary will be made by combining student answers to multiple questions.

Will my child's name be on the survey?

No, this survey is anonymous. The student will not put his/her name anywhere on the survey.

Are there any sensitive questions or anticipated risks?

No. The survey is based on another survey called the School Success Profile. It asks very general questions about school, learning, ways teachers support students, and ways students use time in school. There are no sensitive questions or anticipated risks.

Thank You!

Time for Learning Survey

What is the Time for Learning Survey?

This survey instrument examines your beliefs about yourself, your school and teachers. We need to know more about what makes students successful at school and what students think about time, learning and teaching at this school.

Who is conducting this survey?

Ms. Kris Monahan, a PhD student at the University of Rhode Island/Rhode Island College, is conducting this study under the supervision of her advisor Dr. Susan Gracia.

What do you want me to do?

We would like you to complete the survey. It should take you about 15 minutes to complete. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Please try to answer every question.

Must I participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. However, we encourage you to complete the survey because we think what students think really matters.

Who will see my answers?

Only Ms. Monahan and her advisor will see your completed survey, but we won't be able to identify you. The adults at your school, such as your principal, will see only a summary of your answers made by combining your answers to multiple questions.

Will you know who I am?

No, this survey is anonymous. Do not put your name anywhere on the survey.

Are there any special instructions?

It is important that you follow the directions for each question. Please indicate your answer to each question by marking the response that best represents your answer with an X. You may change your response by erasing your answer and selecting one of the other choices. One more important thing--please do not talk or compare answers with other students. We are interested in knowing YOUR thoughts and feelings.

If you have a question at any point while completing the survey, such as not understanding a word or knowing how to mark an answer, please ask for assistance from the person in charge.

Thank You!

1. HOW WELL DOES EACH OF THESE STATEMENTS DESCRIBE YOU?		Not like me	A little like me	A lot like me
a. I enjoy going to this school.				
b. I get along well with others at this school.				
c. I feel close to other students at this school.				
d. I get along well with teachers at this school.				
e. I am getting a good education at this school.				
f. I feel like I belong at this school.				
g. I am happy that I attend this school				
h. I find school fun and exciting.				
i. I look forward to learning new things at school.				
j. I look forward to going to school.				
k. I am often bored at school.				
2. INDICATE YOUR AGREEMENT WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT YOUR TEACHERS				
My teachers:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Care about me.				
b. Listen to what I have to say.				
c. Care whether or not I come to school.				
d. Give me a lot of encouragement.				
e. Show me respect.				
f. Knows my strengths as a students				
g. Praise my efforts when I work hard.				
h. Care about the grades I make				
i. Expect me to do my best.				
j. Set high standards for my classroom performance				
l. Challenge me to do better in school.				
m. Assign work that makes me think.				
n. Let me know when I am doing less than my best work.				
o. Encourage me when they think that I can do better.				
p. Ask questions that make me think.				
q. Assign work that challenges me.				
r. Let me know how I can improve my classroom performance.				
s. Let me know when I am doing my best work.				

3. INDICATE YOUR AGREEMENT WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT YOUR TEACHERS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>My teachers:</i>				
a. Know a lot about different jobs and careers.				
b. Ask me about my interests in future jobs and careers.				
c. Help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to the real world.				
d. Help me see the value to what I am learning in the classroom.				
e. Help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to my own experiences and interests.				
f. Explain the importance of assignments to my learning.				
g. Often give examples in class from jobs and careers.				
h. Help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to jobs and careers.				
i. Assign work that connects what I am learning in the classroom to jobs and careers.				
j. Encourage me to talk with other adults about their jobs and careers.				
k. Encourage me to think about my future as an adult.				
4. INDICATE YOUR AGREEMENT WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Students' needs come first at this school.				
b. Every student is important at this school.				
c. This is a very good school to attend.				
d. Adults at this school welcome ideas and opinions of students.				
e. Students get a good education at this school.				
f. Teachers at this school care about students.				
g. The principal at this school cares whether or not students come to school.				
h. Students' ideas and opinions are valued at this school.				
i. Sometimes I feel rushed when trying to get my classwork done.				
j. I have enough time in the school day to complete my work.				
k. There is enough time to ask questions in class.				
l. The school day is just the right amount of time.				
m. Time is well spent in this school.				
n. Teachers encourage me to participate in groupwork.				
o. Teachers provide opportunities for me to present my work to my peers.				
p. Teachers provide opportunities to learn from my peers.				
q. Teachers allow me to choose project topics.				
r. I have choices about what I learn in school.				

5. What is the best thing about this school? _____

6. What is the one thing about this school you would like to change? _____

About YOU:

7. I am: _____ Female _____ Male

8. I received free/reduced lunch at school _____ Yes _____ NO _____ Don't Know

9. I am: _____ Black _____ Asian _____ Latino _____ White _____ American Indian
_____ More than one Race _____ Other

10. My family usually speaks English at home _____ Yes _____ No

11. Is this the only middle school you have attended _____ Yes (END HERE) _____ No (Go to 14B& C)

14b. Which middle school did you attend before this one?

_____ REDACTED

_____ REDACTED

_____ REDACTED

_____ REDACTED

_____ Other : List _____

14c. When did you transfer to this school? _____ Middle or End of 6th grade

_____ Beginning of 7th grade

_____ Middle or end of 7th grade

_____ This year

End of Survey

Thank You!!

APPENDIX 4

Summary Scales of Time for Learning Survey

Scale: Academic Relevancy

Source of Scale: Bowen, G.L. & Richman, J.M. (2008). *The School Success Profile*. Chapel Hill, NC: Jordan institute for Families, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Number of Items: 11

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning Survey*: 3a-3j.

Scale: Academic Rigor

Source of Scale: Bowen, G.L. & Richman, J.M. (2008). *The School Success Profile*. Chapel Hill, NC: Jordan institute for Families, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Number of items: 10

Corresponding items from *Time for Learning Survey*: 2i-2s.

Scale: Learning Climate

Source of Scale: Bowen, G.L. & Richman, J.M. (2008). *The School Success Profile*. Chapel Hill, NC: Jordan institute for Families, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Number of Items: 7

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning Survey*: 4a-4g.

Scale: School Satisfaction

Source of Scale: Bowen, G.L. & Richman, J.M. (2008). *The School Success Profile*. Chapel Hill, NC: Jordan institute for Families, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Number of Items: 7

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning Survey*: 1a-1g.

Scale: Student Engagement

Source of Scale: Bowen, G.L. & Richman, J.M. (2008). *The School Success Profile*. Chapel Hill, NC: Jordan institute for Families, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Number of Items: 4

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning* Survey: 1h-1k

Scale: Teacher Support

Source of Scale: Bowen, G.L. & Richman, J.M. (2008). *The School Success Profile*. Chapel Hill, NC: Jordan institute for Families, School of Social Work, The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

Number of Items: 8

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning* Survey: 2a-2h

Scale: Peer to Peer Learning

Source of Scale: Researcher-developed items

Number of Items: 3

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning* Survey: 4n-4p

Scale: Student Choice

Source of Scale: Researcher-developed items

Number of Items: 3

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning* Survey: 4h, 4q, 4r

Scale: Time Well Spent

Source of Scale: Researcher-developed items

Number of Items: 4

Corresponding Items from *Time for Learning* Survey: 4j-4m

APPENDIX 5

Time for Learning individual item statistics by school

Item	School	N	M	SD	T	Df	sig
1a: I enjoy going to school	ELT	101	1.77	.598			
	Non-ELT	125	1.82	.601	-.545	224	.586
1b: I get along well with others at this school	ELT	101	2.29	.638			
	Non- ELT	125	2.54	.516	-3.348	224	.001
1c: I feel close to other students at this school	ELT	101	2.04	.662			
	Non-ELT	123	2.30	.664	-2.932	222	.004
1d: I get along well with teachers at this school	ELT	99	2.26	.679			
	Non-ELT	125	2.19	.592	.831	222	.407
1e: I am getting a good education at this school	ELT	99	2.23	.667			
	Non-ELT	124	2.41	.585	-2.133	221	.034
1f: I feel like I belong at this school	ELT	99	2.07	.704			
	Non-ELT	125	1.98	.756	.960	222	.338
1g: I am happy that I attend this school	ELT	100	2.09	.712			
	Non-ELT	125	1.80	.707	3.047	223	.003
1h: I find school fun and exciting	ELT	101	1.75	.699			
	Non-ELT	125	1.53	.630	2.537	224	.012
1i: I look forward to learning new things at school	ELT	100	2.02	.752			
	Non-ELT	124	1.87	.650	1.591	222	.113
1j: I look forward to going to school	ELT	101	1.85	.713			
	Non-ELT	121	1.74	.680	1.238	220	.217
1k: I am often bored at school	ELT	101	1.83	.749			
	Non-ELT	125	1.59	.685	2.508	224	.013
2a: My teachers care about me.	ELT	98	3.10	.739			
	Non-ELT	125	2.97	.553	1.549	221	.123
2b: My teachers listen to what I have to say	ELT	101	2.90	.794			
	Non-ELT	125	2.96	.640	-.619	224	.537
2c: My teachers care whether or not I come to school	ELT	100	2.66	.890			
	Non-ELT	124	2.83	.833	-1.478	222	.141
2d My teachers give me a lot of encouragement	ELT	101	2.92	.821			
	Non-ELT	125	3.02	.735	-.996	224	.320
2e My teachers show me respect	ELT	101	2.91	.789			
	Non-ELT	124	3.05	.742	-1.344	223	.180

Item	School	N	M	SD	T	Df	sig
2f: My teachers know my strength as a student	ELT	100	2.88	.795			
	Non-ELT	125	3.02	.793	-1.277	223	.203
2g: My teachers praise my efforts when I work hard	ELT	99	2.88	.812			
	Non-ELT	125	2.94	.755	-.621	222	.535
2h: My teachers care about the grades I make	ELT	100	3.06	.776			
	Non-ELT	125	3.22	.691	-1.593	223	.113
2i: My teachers expect me to do my best	ELT	100	3.30	.732			
	Non-ELT	125	3.37	.629	-.749	223	.455
2j: My teachers set high standards for my classroom performance	ELT	100	3.09	.698			
	Non-ELT	125	3.22	.679	-1.366	223	.173
2l: My teachers challenge me to do better in school	ELT	99	3.03	.749			
	Non-ELT	125	3.18	.734	-1.543	222	.124
2m: My teachers assign work that makes me think	ELT	99	3.21	.689			
	Non-ELT	125	3.22	.646	-.133	222	.895
2n: My teacher lets me know when I am doing less than my best work	ELT	99	3.00	.808			
	Non-ELT	125	3.06	.759	-.609	222	.543
2o: My teacher encourages me when they think I can do better	ELT	99	3.06	.780			
	Non-ELT	125	3.25	.668	-1.936	222	.054
2p: My teachers ask questions that make me think	ELT	99	3.04	.781			
	Non-ELT	125	3.10	.705	-.639	222	.523
2q: My teachers assign work that challenges me.	ELT	98	3.08	.769			
	Non-ELT	125	3.06	.693	.180	221	.858
2r: My teachers let me know how I can improve classroom performance	ELT	99	3.04	.755			
	Non-ELT	125	3.08	.758	-.389	222	.698
2s: My teachers let me know when I am doing my best work.	ELT	98	2.97	.831			
	Non-ELT	124	3.03	.845	-.555	220	.580
3a: My teachers know a lot about different jobs and careers	ELT	98	2.97	.739			
	Non-ELT	123	2.83	.686	1.458	219	.146

Item	School	N	M	SD	T	Df	sig
3b: My teachers ask me about my interests in future jobs and careers.	ELT	98	2.77	.847			
	Non-ELT	125	2.55	.866	1.171	221	.243
3c: My teachers help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to the real world	ELT	99	2.94	.726			
	Non-ELT	124	2.81	.840	1.844	221	.067
3d: My teachers help me see the value of what I am learning in the classroom.	ELT	98	3.01	.793			
	Non-ELT	125	2.90	.787	.997	221	.320
3e: My teachers help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to my own experiences and interests	ELT	99	2.85	.837			
	Non-ELT	125	2.79	.826	.505	222	.614
3f: My teachers explain the importance of assignments to my learning.	ELT	97	2.98	.736			
	Non-ELT	122	2.95	.679	.298	217	.766
3g: My teachers often give examples in class from jobs and careers.	ELT	98	2.84	.821			
	Non-ELT	124	2.69	.867	1.251	220	.212
3h: My teachers help me relate what I am learning in the classroom to jobs and careers.	ELT	97	2.86	.750			
	Non-ELT	125	2.67	.869	1.658	220	.099
3i: My teachers assign work that connects what I am learning in the classroom to jobs and careers.	ELT	99	2.73	.780			
	Non-ELT	124	2.52	.860	1.898	221	.059
3j: My teachers encourage me to talk to other adults about jobs and careers.	ELT	99	2.60	.856			
	Non-ELT	124	2.27	.797	2.970	221	.003
3k: My teachers encourage me to think about my future as an adult.	ELT	99	2.91	.809			
	Non-ELT	125	2.94	.836	-.315	222	.753

Item	School	N	M	SD	T	Df	sig
4a: Students' needs come first at this school	ELT	97	2.75	.830	.525	219	.600
	Non-ELT	124	2.69	.828			
4b Every student is important at this school.	ELT	99	2.85	.850	-.921	221	.358
	Non-ELT	124	2.95	.815			
4c This is a very good school to attend.	ELT	98	2.78	.844	1.711	220	.089
	Non-ELT	124	2.57	.903			
4d Adults at this school welcome ideas and opinions of students.	ELT	98	2.91	.761	.373	221	.710
	Non-ELT	125	2.87	.684			
4e Students get a good education at this school.	ELT	98	2.90	.831	.035	219	.972
	Non-ELT	123	2.89	.699			
4f: Teachers at this school care about students.	ELT	97	2.89	.828	-1.211	220	.227
	Non-ELT	125	3.01	.666			
4g: The principal at this school cares whether or not students come to school.	ELT	97	2.97	.951	-1.719	219	.087
	Non-ELT	124	3.18	.846			
4h: Students' ideas and opinions are valued at this school	ELT	99	2.79	.836	-.941	222	.348
	Non-ELT	125	2.89	.754			
4i: Sometimes I feel rushed when trying to get my classwork done.	ELT	98	2.83	.897	-.435	219	.664
	Non-ELT	123	2.88	.855			
4j: I have enough time in the school day to complete my work.	ELT	98	2.76	.838	-.242	220	.809
	Non-ELT	124	2.78	.822			
4k: There is enough time to ask questions in class	ELT	98	2.92	.769	.897	220	.371
	Non-ELT	124	2.82	.807			
4l: The school day is just the right amount of time.	ELT	97	2.49	.991	-3.05	220	.003
	Non-ELT	125	2.90	.987			
4m: Time is well spent in this school.	ELT	96	2.80	.866	-.589	216	.556
	Non-ELT	122	2.87	.802			
4n: Teachers encourage me to participate in groupwork	ELT	97	2.96	.828	-1.016	218	.311
	Non-ELT	123	3.07	.721			
4o: Teachers provide opportunities for me to present my work to my peers.	ELT	99	2.99	.692	-1.272	222	.205
	Non-ELT	125	3.10	.645			

Item	School	N	M	SD	T	Df	sig
4p: Teachers provide opportunities to learn from my peers.	ELT	99	2.92	.804	-.565	221	.573
	Non-ELT	124	2.98	.692			
4q: Teachers allow me to choose project topics.	ELT	98	2.69	.901	.594	221	.553
	Non-ELT	125	2.62	.849			
4r: I have choices about what I learn in school	ELT	99	2.55	.961	2.112	221	.036
	Non-ELT	124	2.27	.997			

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