

Expanded Learning Time Frequently Asked Questions



WHAT IS EXPANDED LEARNING TIME (ELT)?

- Expanded Learning Time (ELT) is an initiative to add additional hours to student learning time. ELT programs give schools an opportunity to reformat the typical student school day to provide students with much needed time, enrichment, and instruction that is required to meet today's high academic standards. Our students need to be better prepared in math, literacy, science, technology, public speaking, and problem solving. Our students need time for music, physical education, and the arts to improve learning. Our teachers need more opportunities to collaborate, plan, and strategically use data to enhance and structurally support student learning. Expanding a student's school day or school year does not mean simply tacking on extra hours to the day or year and also does not mean asking teachers to work a longer schedule with no additional compensation. ELT means redesigning a student's school day to fit a format that will better prepare the student for the challenges of the 21st century. Adding additional hours will allow teachers to emphasize a deeper knowledge of math, literacy, science, and social studies, while including enrichment programs that develop problem-solving abilities and critical-thinking skills and integrating the resources of the entire community toward helping students thrive in a complicated and competitive world. Redesigning the school day is about challenging the students who are already doing well and supporting the students who are struggling.

WHY IS EXPANDED LEARNING TIME (ELT) IMPORTANT FOR MY CHILD?

- With more time in the school calendar, schools are able to provide the range of educational and extracurricular opportunities that can lead to success in college, career and beyond. This is particularly important for students in schools in communities of concentrated poverty, who may lack opportunities for out-of-school activities that are often more readily available to students in communities with higher incomes. Additional time in the school calendar enables schools to provide all students with more individualized instruction, a more well-rounded education, and more of the enrichment activities that make learning fun and engaging.

MY CHILD CURRENTLY ATTENDS AN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM OR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY. HOW DOES A NEW SCHOOL SCHEDULE IMPACT THAT? WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR HIS/HER SPORTS PROGRAM, DANCE CLASS, MUSIC LESSON, ETC.?

- Certainly, an expanded school day means some change. We hope that the new school day will be inviting and engaging for your child. We are inviting community organizations to be part of the planning process in the hopes that some of the vibrant organizations that serve some of the student after school can now serve students during the school day. In regards to other valuable student experiences, those are important. We know from other communities that often smaller providers are able to work with families to adjust to an ELT school calendar as necessary, and often larger programs can adjust as well. There may be bumps in the road as the entire school community adjusts next year, but we believe that the benefits of an expanded school calendar, including adding more enrichment into the year, outweigh the costs.

WHAT HAS CHANGED SINCE I WENT TO SCHOOL THAT NECESSITATES A LONGER SCHOOL DAY, WEEK, OR YEAR?

- A lot has changed- even in the last few generations. Manufacturing jobs that required little education but still provided a path to the middle class are far more scarce. Most middle-class jobs now require people to think critically, to work collaboratively in groups, and to possess other advanced skills. Today's school calendar simply does not give schools the time they need to prepare students for college and careers.

IS MORE TIME REALLY THE SOLUTION? IF SCHOOLS ARE DOING THINGS THAT DON'T WORK, WHY WILL MORE OF THE SAME HELP THEM?

- More time does not mean more of the same. We can't simply tack time on to the school calendar and expect to see strong results. But more time enables schools to rethink the school day, analyzing student and teacher needs before planning a school calendar to include anything from restoring core subjects like science and music, to professional development days, to internships, enrichment, or tutoring programs that connect schools to their larger communities. More time, used well, can have a significantly positive impact on teaching and learning.

WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH AN EXPANDED SCHOOL SCHEDULE?

- More time makes it possible for schools to help all children learn reading and math without crowding out other crucial subjects like science, history, social studies, art, music, and physical education. More time also opens up opportunities for enrichment activities, like elective courses and hands-on learning that make learning engaging and school enjoyable.

Expanding learning time makes it possible for older students to prepare for high school graduation, college and career. The time allows schools, together with business and community partners, to provide students with technical courses, work-based learning, and apprenticeships, as well as rigorous academics and individualized support.

Teachers can use the additional time to collaborate on lesson planning and share best practices from the classroom, thereby helping them improve instruction for their students. More time also enables teachers to review student assessment data to identify problem areas and individualize instruction based on students' unique learning needs, recognizing that each student learns at his or her own pace and that different strategies are critical to effectively teaching different students.

Expanding learning time gives schools opportunities to work with community partners, strengthening schools' bonds with their neighbors and tapping a rich vein of resources for learning, like inviting leaders in different sectors- from business to higher education- to teach elective courses in their fields. Community partners can also support schools to integrate the strongest after-school activities into the longer school day-making them available to all students, and not just those whose families enroll them in programs beyond the school day.

I'M CONCERNED THAT MY CHILD WILL BE TIRED WITH A LONGER DAY.

- There will be some adjustments for students and teachers at the beginning of the year with an expanded school schedule. However, we believe that our new schedule will keep students engaged in learning throughout the day.

HAS THE SCHOOL/DISTRICT ALREADY DECIDED TO EXPAND LEARNING TIME?

- Yes. NLPS has applied to the federal government and been awarded the Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Grant. The first phase of the grant allows the district to implement the planning process during this school year. ELT is expected to add 300 additional hours of learning time for all students in grades K-8. This includes each of the elementary schools and the middle school. The schools are currently in the process of creating their ELT proposals. Proposals are due for submission by April 15th.

HOW WAS OUR SCHOOL CHOSEN? IS THIS ANOTHER MANDATE FROM THE STATE?

- Expanded learning time is not part of a mandate. Rather, we are seeking this opportunity because we believe an expanded schedule could benefit our students and our teachers by providing more time for core academics, enrichment classes and more time for teachers to collaborate. We want to be sure that all our students are prepared to succeed in college, career, and beyond, and we believe that expanding learning time can help to achieve that.

HOW WILL THE NEW SCHEDULE BE FUNDED? WILL THIS BE ANOTHER FLEETING INITIATIVE WITHOUT SUSTAINED FUNDING?

- The schools that are part of the TIME Collaborative have the support of state and local officials to expand learning time, if they should decide to move forward. Through this planning process, we are working with our partners at the National Center on Time & Learning to identify flexible and sustainable funding sources at the local, state, and federal levels that may be available to expand learning time. We do not believe that this is another "flash in the pan" reform; rather, we believe that this can be a long-term sustainable reform for our schools.