

Expanding Learning Time as a Strategy to Improve Learning

American schools need change. And better teaching and more time for learning must be at the center of that change. But educators and policy makers don't yet know how to take advantage of a longer day to accelerate great teaching; and as a result, many efforts to expand the public school day have only provided more of what didn't work in the normal day and have yielded meager results.

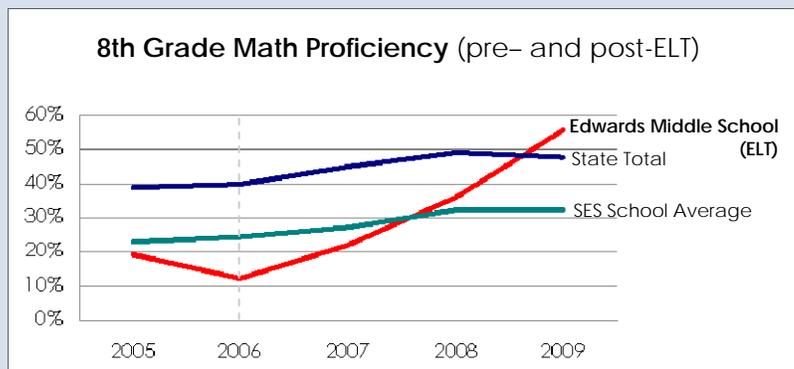
Citizen Schools has developed and tested a strategy for accelerating student learning and transforming struggling public schools. We add 35 percent more learning time, infuse more relevant learning activities and higher expectations for our students, and engage a "second shift" of educators to connect current learning with future college and career opportunities.

Now Citizen Schools hopes to scale its Expanded Learning Time (ELT) model to 22 persistently failing middle schools by 2012 in partnership with 10 rural and urban school districts and public and private funders. These ELT pilots will demonstrate an approach to working with 6th and 8th graders in particular so that they make strong transitions to middle and high school, respectively, and begin to prepare for college.

We will demonstrate how ELT done right can improve and turn around struggling schools. And we will provide the support and relationships that are essential to lift graduation rates — bringing aspiring young educators and committed volunteers, especially scientists and engineers, into schools. This ELT initiative will deliver results, generate learning, and influence policy.

1: A LONGER LEARNING DAY

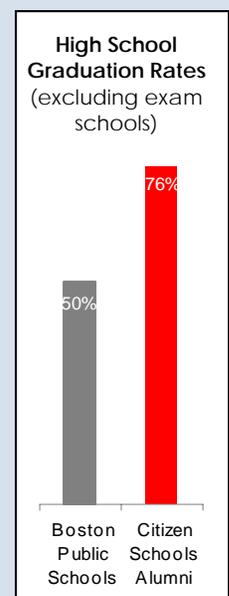
Citizen Schools' ELT model increases learning time for all students in a school or grade by 30% to 40%. That time includes intensive academic coaching, study skills lessons, hands-on apprenticeship courses, leadership development activities, cultural and artistic enrichment, and a series of visits to college campuses. Citizen Schools' staff members partner with classroom teachers to align content and methods and build a consistent culture of achievement. In Boston, Citizen Schools' ELT model helped transform a failing school into a success story, where low-income students now outperform their counterparts in more affluent schools:



Students at the Edwards Middle School, with its ELT partnership with Citizen Schools, have reversed the achievement gap in math, surpassing the state average.

2: PATHWAYS TO HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

At Citizen Schools' 8th Grade Academy, students make the connection between current learning and future opportunity. By analyzing their high school choices, visiting ten college campuses, and taking the actions that students need to take to make college accessible and affordable, students raise their awareness and aspirations for college attainment. A long-term evaluation has reported that Citizen Schools' 8th Grade Academy students were far more likely to graduate from high school in four years than the average for their district, despite starting middle school behind their peers.



3. HANDS-ON SCIENCE EDUCATION

As part of its ELT initiative, Citizen Schools will directly recruit 10,000 scientists and engineers to lead hands-on apprenticeship courses that build students' skills and fuel their imaginations. Working with experts, students will design solar cars and video games, launch model rockets and track their trajectories, reduce their carbon footprint, and create web sites for community organizations. We have built strong partnerships with technology companies such as Google, IBM, and Microsoft to secure volunteers and create hands-on curricula that align with state standards. Additionally, in collaboration with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, Citizen Schools will leverage its apprenticeship model to support a White House-backed effort to get tens of thousands of scientists into classrooms to share their expertise and career paths with students and bring science to life.



Citizen Schools students visit a lab at Biogen Idec to conduct experiments with scientists.

EVALUATION AND LEARNING AGENDA

Citizen Schools will undertake a rigorous national evaluation and build strategic partnerships to develop tools and techniques to turn successful pilots into systemic reforms. Citizen Schools has engaged Abt Associates to conduct a quasi-experimental study of our ELT impact and Public/Private Ventures to conduct a randomized control trial of our 8th Grade Academy program. In addition, Citizen Schools will partner with Microsoft to develop a state-of-the-art software platform that bridges school day and extended day staff and volunteers; and we are working with WGBH to build a scalable training and curricula sharing platform.

POLICY

Citizen Schools' ELT initiative will bridge the domains of practice and policy. We will share the evidence and learning we generate to shape education policies that encourage expansion and restructuring of the learning day as a reform strategy and not just "more of the same;" we will also advance policy ideas to help students transition from middle school to high school; and we will help create alternative pathways into teaching, both for recent college graduates and for professionals, especially scientists and engineers.

FUNDING

Citizen Schools plans to raise \$80 million from our partner districts and philanthropy by 2015 to fully implement the Expanded Learning Time initiative. In addition, Citizen Schools is working to create sustainable streams of public funding through passage of the Time for Innovation Matters in Education bill (introduced in summer 2009), and policy revisions to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and Title I—all within the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) currently underway in Congress.

ABOUT CITIZEN SCHOOLS

Citizen Schools partners with middle schools to expand the learning day for children in low-income communities across the country. We mobilize a second shift of afternoon educators, who provide academic support, leadership development, and "apprenticeships" — hands-on projects taught by volunteers from business and civic organizations. At Citizen Schools, students develop the skills they need to succeed in high school, college, the workforce, and civic life.