



# **The Promise of Extended-Time Schools for Closing the Achievement Gap**

## **A Speech to the National Association of Year Round Education**

I am honored to be able to address you today on the exciting efforts taking place in Massachusetts to break from what we all agree is one of the most stifling and counter-productive elements of our school system – the calendar. Like you, I and my colleagues at Massachusetts 2020, the organization I co-founded five years ago, believe that the current school calendar that grew out of a 19<sup>th</sup> century agrarian society just doesn't make sense in today's information-based, globalized economy. Like you, we believe that what should drive the time children spend in school is not the inertia from years past, but the learning needs of today's students. Most of all, like you, we believe that the only way to close the achievement gap is to break from the prison of time – as the National Commission on Time and Learning put it a dozen years ago – to insure that all children are spending enough quality time in school to achieve the level of proficiency they will need to become productive members of our society in the future.

I want to talk today about three aspects of our work. First, I will detail some of the research we've done to look at schools that do operate on a longer day and often year. We call these "extended-time schools" and we released a study last fall that illustrates and analyzes some of the effective practices of these schools. Second, I want to describe our policy work in Massachusetts that has led my state to become the first in the nation to support efforts of school

districts to significantly extend the time students are in school. Finally, I will talk briefly about some of the challenges schools and districts are facing in their work to break from the current school calendar and offer some insights about future work in this area.

Before I dive in, however, I want to clarify our position a bit because in some way our efforts and the work of the NAYRE are not a perfect fit. At Massachusetts 2020 – and now in districts throughout our state – we are pressing for a longer day and a longer year. That is, we seek students to be in school for more time, not just for the calendar to be re-organized to eliminate the long summer break which can act to interrupt – and therefore set back – learning. Although we applaud and support your efforts, we believe that the *additional* time during the day and year we are seeking will afford students and teachers more opportunities than they have in the current calendar of 180 six-hour days. In a longer day and year, students can become involved in enrichment activities which are integrated deeply into their learning in core academic subjects; teachers can have time for common planning and individual preparation time built into their days; and parents can be supported by making their child’s school schedule match more closely with their own work schedule. We agree that the current summer vacation schedule can be a detriment to learning, but we also want to see children get *more* time in productive learning environments.

What led us to this conclusion was a simple fact, which you may already know. Children spend only 20 percent of their waking hours in school. That’s it – 20 percent. There is so much that takes place in the 80 percent of time they spend outside of school that has a profound impact on what they can learn and achieve and, yet, somehow, as a nation, we expect that 20 percent of time is sufficient to override or compensate for the other four-fifths of kids’ time. This expectation is especially misplaced when talking about kids from economically disadvantaged backgrounds where they often lack the familial assets – both financial and

otherwise – that can give them a leg up on school learning. Kids from poor neighborhoods are less likely to be involved in quality after-school activities, less likely to come from homes that have access to things needed to support learning – from private tutors to adequate books in the home – and more likely to confront barriers to learning like poor health and frequent moves. How can only one-fifth of any given student’s life possibly make up for all the liabilities that a child may suffer from as a result of coming from a disadvantaged home?

As you may know, the best empirical research that shows the degree to which of out-of-school factors influence school performance comes from scholars exploring the summer gap. One study by Alexander, Entwisle and Olson tested two groups of students – one from middle-class families and one from poor families – in Fall and Spring in five successive years. Results showed that students of low and high socioeconomic status made essentially the same relative academic progress from Fall to Spring (that is, during the school year), but that the learning curve for students from low SES stayed flat (or declined) from Spring to Fall (over the summer), while those of high SES students continued to rise. The end result is that by the end of fifth grade, the overall gap between low SES students and high SES students had grown so that the students from poor families are approximately two grade levels behind in verbal and 1.5 years behind in math.<sup>1</sup>

A longer school day and year will certainly not entirely overcome this gap, but more time, together with other essential elements that comprise a quality education, can tip the balance in favor of promoting academic achievement. We have seen first hand, in eight schools we visited over the 2004 – 05 school year, how the impact of more time cannot be underestimated. Before I share with you some of the effective practices of these schools, I wanted to take a step back and review the theoretical and research basis for why the time factor is so fundamental to learning.

Back in 1963, an educational psychologist named John Carroll attempted to distill the many overlapping theories of learning that had emerged in his field into a simple – though not simplistic – formula to help educators to understand how time impacts learning. He proposed that for any individual the degree of learning, which he defined as moving from ignorance of a fact or concept to understanding of it, rests upon the ratio of the time spent learning divided by the time needed for learning.

$$\text{Degree of Learning} = \frac{\text{Time Spent}}{\text{Time Needed}}$$

The closer an individual learner gets to spending the time they actually need to learn any given fact or concept, the higher the degree of learning. Though perfect equilibrium (that is, a ratio of 1:1) is rarely achieved, schools should at least strive to achieve it as often as possible for as many students as possible.<sup>2</sup>

Carroll readily admitted that his formula could not explain everything about the schooling process, but, still, this formula is incredibly useful for tracking how well our education system is structured to enable the highest degree of learning possible. Since the advent of standards-based reform, there is little doubt that the expectations for learning have risen dramatically. The designated curriculum is broader and deeper than ever and, more importantly, all students are expected to achieve proficiency within this curriculum. In other words, the left side of the equation is at a higher level than thirty or even ten years ago. With the “time needed” element, there has been change, as well. Policymakers and educators are surely more focused than ever on improving teaching quality. The success of this effort is open to question, but certainly the effort has been made. Yet, this comes at a time when other factors in the time needed element contribute to a rise. The increase of the number of English-language

learners, the increase in single-parent homes, the continued ill-effects of poverty, all make the aggregate level of time needed rise.

Meanwhile, on the numerator – time spent– nothing (at least in terms of time allotted) has changed. The calendar of 180 six-hour days that was the norm in the 1940s is the norm today. In other words, as the expectations for learning have risen and the time needed to reach those expectations have also risen, the time spent has remained constant, meaning that the overall ratio between the time needed and time spent has fallen. The result, according to Carroll’s formula, would be that the degree of learning will slow. One need look no further than the persistent achievement gap to see that this result has become our reality.

By the way, the most straightforward way to view the ramifications of this formula is to look at outcomes research on those programs that seek to extend learning time, namely evaluations of quality out-of-school time programs. In program after program, whether in after-school or summer, we can see that if students are given more time in productive learning environments they will actually learn more and perform better in school.

Or consider the following. Of those schools that have both the freedom to set their schedule and are accountable for student success (that is, charter schools), an overwhelming number of them operate on an extended-time schedule. Looking at it from the opposite perspective – that is, looking at outcomes first and determining what factors might have led to those outcomes – gives a similar message about extended-learning time. A recent analysis of nine urban high schools in Massachusetts that significantly outperformed schools serving similar populations of students revealed that every single one of those schools had more learning time than a conventional schedule offers.

Given this context, Mass 2020 reviewed education data from across the country and found that there was no single source in the U.S. that documented how more learning time

actually impacted student learning outcomes. In fact, time as an element in learning was, despite Carroll's work, almost tangential to the main research fields in learning. Certainly, little research has been done outside of controlled experiments to understand how more time makes a difference to a school and to the individual learning process. Neither was there any one source of information that identified states, districts or schools that had systematically added learning time to the schedule.

As such, Mass 2020 secured funding to investigate a set of high-performing schools that had actually increased the time spent learning by extending the school day and year to understand how such a practice was implemented and how the educators there perceived the additional time as facilitating their positive outcomes. Specifically, we chose to study eight extended-time schools that had already demonstrated success and also were serving populations that in traditional schools were lagging behind. (Incidentally, we defined an extended-time school as any school where all students attend for at least 15% more time than the surrounding district.) Our secondary expectation was that our findings might push policymakers and educators to think about how they could spread the benefits of extended time to a much greater number of schools.

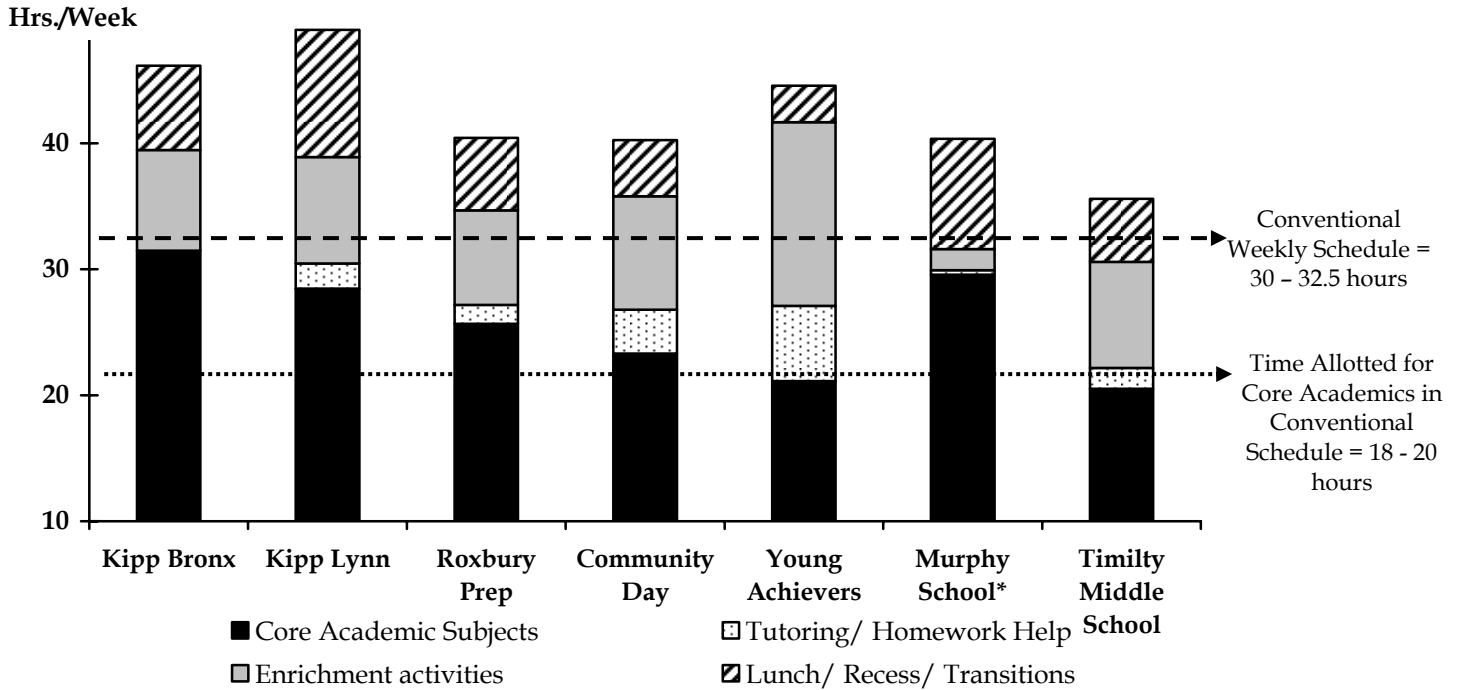
We released our study back in November and I want to share with you key findings in four areas – scheduling for students, benefits for learning, staffing structure and financing. Before I get to these, however, let me share three general observations. First, because this was a study based on site visits, it was a description and analysis of what we observed at each school *at the time we visited*. In other words, the specifics of the schedules, the particular outcomes, etc. do certainly change. Our study is a snapshot, not a moving picture. Second, each school is unique. The eight schools we chose to examine – and, by the way, I'm not going to get into the methodology of selecting these schools here, as we provide a full explanation in our printed

study – each has a unique way of managing their school and promoting academic excellence. Therefore, the aggregate picture we paint is somewhat determined by the particular schools we chose. At the same time, common themes kept occurring and so we have a high degree of confidence that what we discovered about these particular extended-time schools applies more generally. One of these themes – and one worth mentioning up front – is that none of these schools thought that extending time alone constituted a sufficiently complete strategy to achieve full proficiency among the student body. Other elements, such as strong leadership and family engagement needed to be in place to insure success. I'll go into these a bit more later in my presentation. For now, suffice it to say that more time alone is not enough.

I am going to dive in deep to each of the areas I mentioned a moment ago, but let me first give you the topline findings for each. First, on scheduling, more time does not mean just more of the same – more time sitting in classrooms. While there generally is some additional time devoted to core academics, there is also a large chunk of time set aside for enrichment activities (for example, arts, music and sports) and also the opportunity for many (if not all) students to receive individualized or small group tutoring. Second, for teachers, the extra time is generally perceived not as a burden of having to spend more time at school, but as a benefit – giving them opportunity to hone their craft and develop camaraderie with their colleagues. Third, financially, extended-time schools do cost more, but the increased costs do not rise nearly as fast as the time added because so much of the costs are leveraged. For instance, typically health care benefit or transportation costs do not go up when the day is lengthened by two hours. Finally, across the eight schools we visited, there was near universal appreciation of the value of more time for enabling the school to reach its potential.

**Figure 1**

**Student Schedules at Profiled Schools**



**Notes:** Totals based on 6th grade schedules at all schools except KIPP Academy Lynn which, at the time of this study, served only 5th grade. Core Academic Subjects include: math, English/Language Arts, science, social studies, and foreign languages (if they are a required part of the curriculum). Enrichment, electives, and other activities include: art, PE, music, dance, clubs, computers, advisory/homeroom, foreign languages (if offered as an elective), and other school-wide community building activities. Except for the Murphy School, only time required for all students is shown in the chart. For the Murphy School the schedule of students in extended-day program is shown (Total 307 students). Though not shown here, some of the schools also offer optional after-school and Saturday programming.

Now on to some of the specifics. First, scheduling. Figure 1 shows that breakdown of the schedule into the four major categories – core academics, enrichment, tutoring and transitions (including recess and lunch). You can see by the two marker lines that most of the schools exceed the 20-hour average for core academic time and, of course, for total time. Also, take a look at the enrichment bar. These schools offered an average of 9 hours per week of enrichment. Most traditional schools offer 4 hours at the most. More time also offers more time

for activities that might get squeezed like recess. In fact, there was one district in Massachusetts where the superintendent tried to eliminate recess in order to build in a few more minutes in class. Needless to say, the move caused an uproar among parents. The schools in our study never had to make that choice.

Beneath this overview analysis of student schedules, there are a few scheduling-related practices that are worth pointing out that, according to the teachers and administrators, benefit the teaching and learning process. The most obvious is that a longer day allows for longer individual classes. In addition to enabling more time on task, specifically, the elongated class periods has led some schools to re-think the organization of entire curricula and, in some cases, use a much longer period to blend two curricula together. (For example, a two-hour humanities class for middle school students integrates skills learned through English like reading and writing into a social studies curriculum.) Beyond the effects on individual classes, more time built into a student's schedule facilitates the opportunity for an individual student to be pulled out of a non-core academic class for tutoring or, more common, for the school to designate times during the day when students receive homework help or individual or small group instruction. It also allows schools to build in many enrichment activities and, importantly, because all enrolled students are there for the additional hours, those activities can be placed anywhere in the day - not just in their traditional "after-school slot."

Of course, the real reason we care - or anybody cares - about an extended-time schedule is whether it makes a difference for the teaching and learning. In addition to the academic data, educators and students we spoke with at these schools, emphasized that more time definitely does have a real impact. First, with more time, there is definitely the ability to extend individual classes. This enables not only more time on task - which by Carroll's estimation, you'll recall, is essential - it also enables teachers to cover more topics and topics more in-depth.

One teacher we spoke with mentioned how much easier it is to teach a 90-minute class than a 50-minute one precisely because she was able to take longer to explain topics and longer for the students to work with and internalize the material. It also allows teachers to deal more effectively with diverse ability levels. One student argued that a longer class means no question is left unanswered.

It is worth noting, too, that like every other school, these schools feel the most pressure to reach proficiency in math and English, so they do give a bit more time to those two subject areas – all for the purpose of increasing learning time, deepening the curriculum, etc. But unlike in a traditional school, this extending of time in math and English does not mean that the schools have to steal time from science or social studies.

The other major piece that these schools add, as I mentioned, is enrichment activities. Now these activities vary from things like arts, drama, sports and music to chess club to – for older kids – internships and community service. What they do, however, is excite kids about learning in ways that often a classroom can't. Because they are highly connected to what the kids are learning in school, it is not just “wasted time,” but activities that truly enforce core academics. For example, one school had kids in art class working on making replicas of quilts using particular geometric designs used by the Underground Railroad during slavery. This art project had managed to reinforce both history and geometry in a single lesson.

Finally, the individual tutoring allows not only the benefits of more time on task, but also helps to deepen child-teacher relationships as the tutoring is typically conducted by the students' own teachers in either designated times or pull-out sessions throughout the day.

Now, we come to the issue of how to staff these schools. After all, if you increase the teacher work day from an average of 6 hours to one that is closer to 8 hours, the school will definitely need to think about how it can recruit and retain teachers for that model. We found

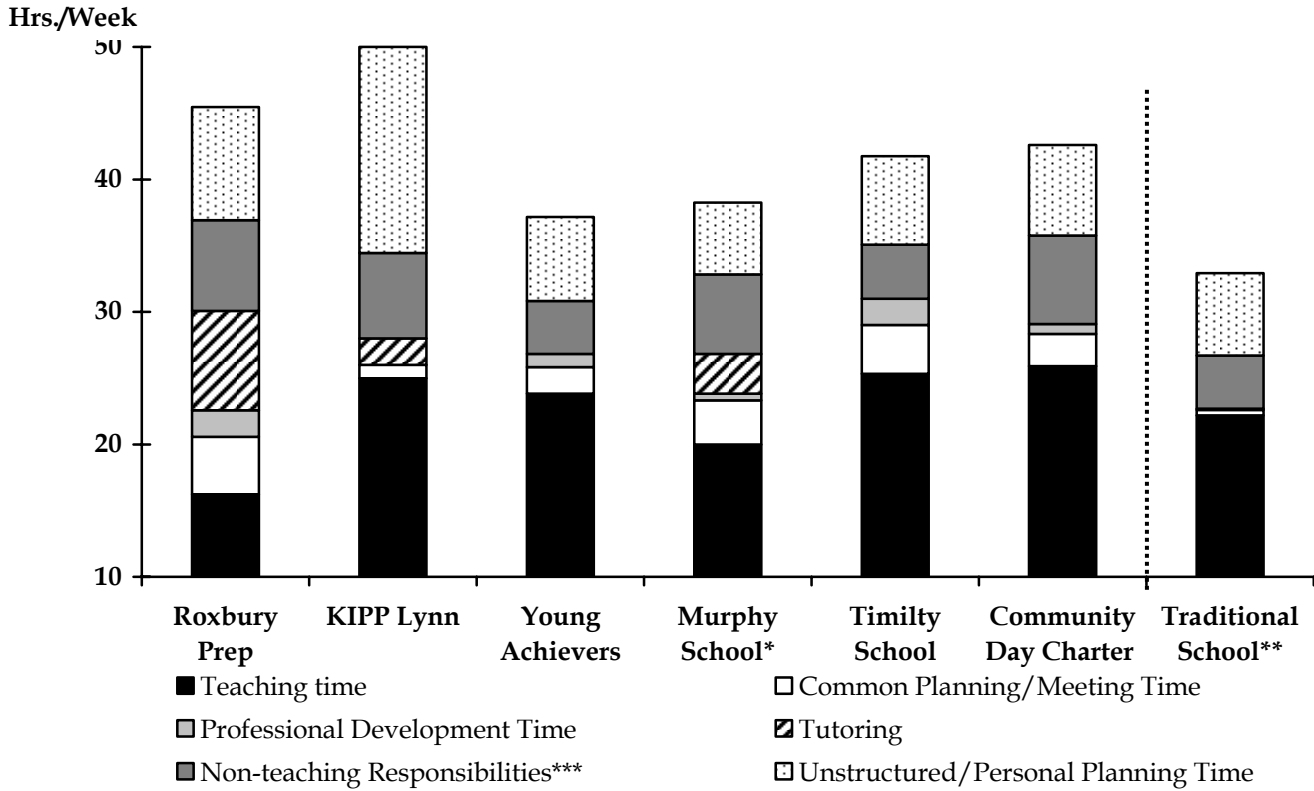
that there were two basic arrangements. The first is practiced entirely by charter schools which, of course, are public schools with the flexibility to operate this way. Namely, that for teachers expecting to work a longer day, there is no supplemental compensation. Instead, these teachers claim that other benefits like a smaller class size or a supportive school culture make up for the fact that they might work longer hours. Yet, this obviously is not an arrangement that is all that useful outside of charter schools. Regular districts which abide by union contracts can't expect to have teachers work more hours for the same pay. Instead, these teachers typically get either stipends or a set hourly rate beyond their base salary. In some cases, they simply get a percentage higher than their salary would be at a non-extended-time school.

In all of the schools we visited, there was use of supplementary staff, especially for enrichment activities. In some instances, these staff operated more as paraprofessionals and worked alongside teachers in the classrooms. In most cases, they operated their own classes around specialized topics like instrument lessons or karate. Often, the supplemental staff did more than just expand programming for students; it also freed up time for core academic teachers to meet in common planning sessions or participate in professional development activities.

Which leads us to the matter of teacher schedules. Like with student schedules, we've broken a weekly teacher schedule at these schools into categories to see how they compare to a traditional school. (See Figure 2.) In the case of teachers, we used six categories, including their teaching time, other official responsibilities (like hallway monitor) and common planning time. You can see by comparing to the last column on the right – which is a composite of several Massachusetts districts based on times stipulated in teacher contracts – that the teaching time is generally not much more than the traditional schools. Instead, the extra time teachers are at school is devoted to common planning, individual planning and tutoring.

**Figure 2**

**Teacher Schedules at Profiled Schools**



\* Calculated for teachers who teach in the school-run extended-day program

\*\* Based on a sampling of districts in Massachusetts

\*\*\* Includes supervision of arrival, dismissal, lunch, recess, and enrichment activities

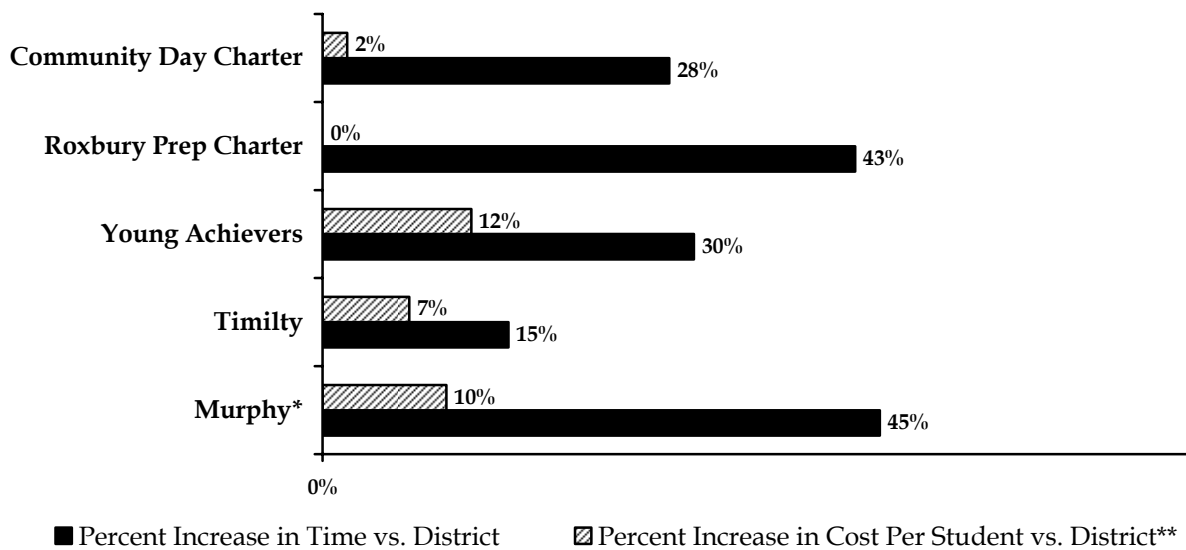
The result of these schedules is that teachers generally have positive feelings toward the way their time is structured. Many who had taught in more traditional schools commented that they were routinely staying at school longer than their scheduled hours anyway to grade papers or plan for the next day. In the extended-time school at least they were paid for the extra time they put in. Others noted that the common planning time – which often happened 2 – 3 times per week – was a huge bonus in terms of deepening their professionalism and their ability to check in on individual students with colleagues. In terms of the longer classes, most admitted

that a longer class period took some getting used to, but that pretty soon they saw how the benefits outweighed the challenges.

Now let's move to the area of financing, the area that always seems to stand in the way of even beginning a discussion of restructuring the school calendar. As I noted earlier, the costs of these extended-time schools was more – in most cases – but the additional costs over what a standard school in the district would cost per pupil was not nearly as much as the amount of additional time added. Figure 3 compares increase in time at these schools versus the district schools to the percentage increase in costs at these schools compared to the district shows that while these schools' scheduled ranged from 15% to 45% more than the surrounding district, their costs ranged only from 0% to 15% more.

**Figure 3**

**Percent Added Time vs. Percent Added Cost at Profiled Schools**  
*Per Pupil Figures Compared to Surrounding District*



\* Data for Murphy School reflects costs for 307 students participating in extended-day program only

\*\* Cost per student is based on analysis of 2004 actual per pupil expenditure data (Source: Massachusetts Department of Education).

And such figures make sense, if you think about it. The major cost driver at the school level for each additional hour is teacher salary increases. You don't have to pay more for the roof or the desks and chairs. There are modest increases in energy costs, of course, and other personnel, like secretaries and such, but most of costs to operate a school remain steady whether that school is in operation for six hours or eight hours. Each additional day added beyond the traditional year of 180 days does cost a bit more because of transportation costs, but still is far lower than the increase in total time. (In fact, when I talk about our policy work in a little bit, you'll hear that the state will give \$1,300 per pupil for 30% more time. In a state where the average per pupil cost is around \$7,200, this \$1,300 represents roughly 18%.)

The other reason that extended-time schools cost less than the time they add is because – being innovative institutions – they find ways to leverage money that already comes in to them or obtain additional money than they receive through regular district, state and federal sources. They shift usage of grants, or apply for new money that can be used in a variety of ways. For example, many of the schools receive 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grants to pay for a coordinator who then coordinates all the partnerships in the school. These partners, in turn, often come with their own private grant money so they cost little or nothing for the school. The bottom line is that because these schools are breaking from the traditional, it takes some creativity and extra effort to make it work. We hope someday that extended-time schools will become the norm with the financing understood as a necessary part of a state and district budget.

I need to raise an important point and one I made at the outset. Each of these extended-time schools has many more assets than just the additional time. In fact, the time itself is meaningless unless it can be utilized well. To make that happen, schools need a set of other building blocks. First and foremost, a school – like a business or any organization – needs a

strong leader with vision and sound management skills to be successful. Successful principals are able to set high expectations for teachers and students; convey a compelling vision for the school's success; create a work environment for teachers that is stimulating, supportive, and rewarding; and leverage and attract resources to support the school's needs.

The principal sets the tone for the school and also focuses on developing other key elements, such as: building external partnerships; fostering a positive school culture; integrating the positive use of data within school operations; reaching out to and including families within the school; and, perhaps most importantly, building and enhancing a professional corps of teachers. All of these are necessary for success.

Now where does extended-time fit into all this? The schools we visited tell us that it is a tool – more time with students makes it easier to do their jobs and makes their work more effective. It is like flour and yeast in bread – you need both to yield the right result, but it is impossible to separate out the relative importance of each.

Yet, in our research, we did come across one interesting data point that suggests the particular value of more time. Roxbury Prep Charter School, which certainly has all the building blocks I just mentioned, shared with us an interesting experience. In their first year of operation, they offered only one hour of math to their students. By its second year Roxbury Prep teachers and leaders realized that one hour was not sufficient and they doubled the amount of time the students spent in math class. The gap between the academic performance of the Class of 2002 – the first class which had one hour of math for its first two of three years at the school – and that of subsequent classes – which experienced double math classes for all three years of their time at Roxbury Prep – is significant both in terms of passing rates and proficiency rates. Does this prove that more time has a concrete amount of value-added? No, but it certainly is suggestive of the power that more time can have on student outcomes.

So ends the research portion of my talk. I now want to describe some of the work we are doing right now to see that students and teachers in more schools – and in particular conventional district schools – can reap the benefits of a longer day and year. Over the past year, we have been very active in state policy, realizing that the only way to break free of the traditional calendar, the stranglehold of the traditional calendar, some might say, is to operate at a policy level -- not only to change the law about the time expectations for schools, but also to make public resources available to make the extension of school time possible.

First, a brief outline of our role as an organization and our goals to making extended-time schools more widespread and a core element of the next phase of education reform. As I talked about in the first half of my speech, we started with research about the effective practices of existing extended-time schools. The point of this research was not only to learn about what it takes to create and operate such a school, but also to plant the seed for more widespread reform – to let the education and policy world know that extending school time beyond the conventional 180 6-hour days must be an essential element of success moving forward.

In fact, our original intent in this was to start a pilot with private money to show how conversions to a longer day would be possible and – we hoped – fruitful and then to use these handful of schools to convince lawmakers to fund a broader pilot or set of schools for conversion with public dollars. But such an idea was frowned upon by the high-powered advisory board of education and political leaders we had convened to guide us in this policy effort. Many on this board encouraged us to seek public money from the outset and make extended-time schools an integral part of the education policy landscape. Otherwise, they cautioned, we could launch yet another pilot that never expands significantly. So we quickly shifted gears to design an effective policy that would lead to school reform. The ultimate aim of

all these efforts is to make real what the National Education Commission on Time and Learning declared over a decade ago: building a school schedule around the real needs of student learning, rather than setting some arbitrary fixed times in which to learn and expecting all children to rise to the same level of proficiency with no regard to their individual skills, background and teachers. We might call it the John Carroll ideal. Then, true to our mission, we will do our best to evaluate how effective the new schools are in moving kids to proficiency and, more generally, supporting children and their families.

Moving forward with this policy strategy, we developed six principles to which any specific policy we would propose would have to adhere. And these principles didn't spring from thin air, of course, but came about with our many discussions with educators and policymakers. I don't want to spend too much time going into each one, but let me run through the list so you get the sense of what we think makes our approach both practically feasible and politically attractive:

- **Strategic** – New money should go to districts that are well positioned to use it effectively in targeted areas of improvement
- **Local Control** – State support must allow districts to use money flexibly; parameters to spur innovation, rather than compliance
- **Substantial Redesign** – Not just adding more of the same, schools should restructure the schedule to allow for improved instruction, enrichment, tutoring, prof. development, etc.
- **Partnerships** – Schools should team up with community-based organizations or universities to create a more well-rounded program
- **Accountable** – New money would be linked to outcomes and renewal subject to favorable performance

- **Ongoing State Funding** – Communities must be able to rely on ongoing state funding if they are going to take the risk to implement substantial innovation

With these principles guiding us, we then worked with the chairs of the education committee in the state legislature to develop a program that would (a) meet these principles, (b) pass the legislature and (c) spur districts to action. With that in mind, we came upon the idea of starting our policy work by developing a pilot grant program funded by the state and managed by the state Department of Education. These grants would be given to districts to engage in a planning process to convert at least one of their schools to a longer day and/or year.

By the way, originally we had thought that we would try to get the state to fund full-scale conversions right out of the gate. But for two reasons we backed away from this plan. First, such a request of the legislature would have been in the millions of dollars to implement extended-time schools across several districts. We thought it better to build up a ready demand among some districts for the funding before we pushed for such a huge sum. Second, we began to appreciate just how hard it is to undergo these conversions. There is no way that districts could even commit to moving ahead with a conversion to a longer day if they had not yet undergone the many discussions and negotiations it would take to lay the groundwork for this momentous change.

So, back in April we worked with the Senate chair of the education committee and he submitted a line item, which then passed within the FY 2006 budget, that set aside \$500,000 for planning grants to districts. And this is how they were designed. First, they required districts to target at least one school for conversion to a longer day and/or year. In fact, the additional time was significant: the targeted schools were to add 30% more time to the school schedule. Second, the districts received approximately \$25,000 to pay for expenses associated with the initial planning process. Third, to emphasize our belief that schools are better when they

partner with other organizations or universities, the grant noted preference for districts that sought to build partnerships. Finally, though we know that all students can benefit from more time in productive learning environments, students from underresourced cities often benefit the most. Thus, the legislation had a built-in preference for poorer districts.

After advertising this funding opportunity across the state through our network of supporters – including the state superintendents’ association and the association of school committees – the response was greater than we anticipated. A total of 45 districts expressed some interest in the grant. Almost half of those applied and, of those, the Department of Education selected 16 to receive a grant in Year One. Since that announcement in late October, two dropped out, but 14 districts are forging ahead with their planning. These 14 then become the first districts in the nation to participate in a state-sponsored program to deliberately break from the conventional school calendar. There are other state-sponsored reforms – charter schools being the most prominent – that give public schools the freedom to break from the calendar, but this is the first program in the nation where unshackling schools from the conventional calendar is the specific objective and, further, that this unshackling – this school redesign around more time – is considered a primary means to close the achievement gap.

Who are these districts? Most are urban and serve large proportions of low-income children. There are three that are more suburban in nature and even one that could be classified as rural – at least by Massachusetts standards. A total of 44 schools are set to undergo conversions and together over 17,000 students will be affected. As we speak, all 14 districts who received a grant have submitted preliminary plans to the Mass. Department of Education and, despite facing numerous challenges, continue to move forward with their planning. Final plans are due in the middle of April and the DOE will inform districts if they are approved by the beginning of May.

What will a successful application look like? There is bound to be a good deal of variation among districts, but a plan that has any chance of working should have six key elements. First, it must be very clear just how much extra time will for *all* students be added and how that time will be built into the day and year. Second, it must describe in detail how the additional time will be put to use and how its use will lead to higher academic achievement of students. Third and related, the arguments about using additional time to promote learning should suggest what we found in our own research – more time is about more academics, but also about more enrichment programming and building in sufficient time for teachers to participate in common planning and professional development. Fourth, the school needs to show not only that the schedule will be redesigned, but also its institutional structure will expand. It must demonstrate how external partners will be brought in to supplement and support the learning program. Fifth, the plan must show clearly how the extra time will be paid for or, more precisely, how the assumed \$1,300 per student from the state will be spent. Finally, the school redesign will succeed only if it has consensus – buy in – from teachers, students, parents, administrators and even community partners. The converted school must be perceived as “win” for all before anyone will invest to make that success possible.

Together these six elements are a tall order, but, to our extreme satisfaction, fourteen districts seem to be up to the task. Whether or not, they make a convincing case in their application – indeed, whether or not they actually are able to submit a final application – is still very much up in the air, but we remain optimistic that because these districts appreciate how the current school calendar is hampering their efforts to close the achievement gap, they will do everything they can to make this happen in the coming months.

As an aside, I wanted to mention that most of the preliminary plans submitted so far will be seeking to extend the time by adding time to the day, rather than by adding days to the

year. In a couple of cases, schools will be adding one or two weeks at the end of August. The kind of fundamental restructuring of the school calendar and eliminating the long summer break that the NAYRE is interested in, however, is not really on the docket thus far. I think that districts are dealing with the political realities that we discovered in our own polling on the subject. A longer day is twice as popular as a school schedule that cuts into the traditional summer vacation. They are fighting so many battles that taking on one more just doesn't seem feasible at this time.

Let me detail some of these challenges districts are facing. For starters, as you might expect, working out the specifics of how to re-write union contracts to accommodate the longer schedule is not easy. Unions generally support the idea of having the opportunity for their teachers to work for more hours, but, rightly, are seeking to insure that their members are fairly compensated for the additional hours. The negotiations have not been too contentious, on the whole, but there has been a high level of back and forth about what is "fair" for all involved. Another area where there has been "pushback" is from parents, especially in middle-class communities. They argue that extended schedules cut into their children's current after-school activities and into family time. Though these resisters are a minority, they are a vocal minority and their resistance has made some public officials - especially those who are elected - cast a more skeptical eye on the extended schedule. (Urban parents, you should know are almost universally supportive.) Finally, another challenge is getting the schools to develop real partnerships with external partners. As I mentioned earlier, the grant legislation stipulates a preference for schools and districts that forge partnerships as part of the school re-design. But actually developing these kinds of productive partnerships - especially from scratch - is not easy.

A second set of challenges revolves around the mechanics and thematics of developing a fresh educational program. The grant – and the Department of Education – is asking schools not just to tack on a few extra hours onto the week or a few extra days onto the year, but really to reformulate the entire schedule around having maximal educational impact. But there is a huge amount of research to disassemble and process to understand how to maximize impact. And even though it is the mission and practice of schools to think in these terms, a forced re-thinking of practices is never easy or straightforward. Questions like, how to integrate more hands-on learning approaches into longer classes, what types of enrichment activities yield the most benefit for promoting academic achievement, how to best integrate small-group instruction in the school day do not have simple answers and schools – to their enormous credit – are grappling with how to answer them now. And they don't have a huge number of models on which to build and adapt.

Finally, the grant process itself raises significant challenges. Chief among these is the funding issue. All through this talk, I've suggested that we are seeking millions of dollars from the state for implementation. In fact, if you do the math – \$1,300 per student and 17,000 students – it comes out to over \$22 million. While state revenues in Massachusetts are on the rise and we do have many advocates in the legislature for this education reform, securing this funding is far from a guarantee. We can boast of a huge initial first step. A few weeks ago, the governor proposed \$15 million for the implementation of extended-time schools in his budget submitted to the legislature. We believe we'll need a few more millions than this, but it does set the table for further action. Until the governor signs the final budget in late June, however, nothing is a guarantee. Imagine you are a school district planning to open a school with a substantially expanded schedule in September, but you don't know for sure until only two months earlier if this is possible. Not easy. Still, districts have been willing to take the risk.

Finally, for such a substantial change to the institutional structure of schools it is certainly a quick planning timeline, but our belief and operating assumption is that unless you build in momentum, build in a sense of urgency, the idea of extended-time, like that of any really hard school reform, can wither on the vine. A tight timeline forces districts to “put their all” into the planning and will, we hope, push the legislature to fund the implementation at the appropriate level. It is a fluid process and we have been trying to align the forces pushing in many different directions as carefully as possible so that they end up working together instead of against each other. To date, our alignment has been productive – and we’re keeping our fingers crossed – but we must continually work at making sure that we remain productive and that the dream of building an education system around a schedule that meets the learning needs of all children becomes reality.

As an aside, I want to be a bit more explicit about how Mass 2020 has played a role throughout this process. First off, we have been fortunate that the people in the Department of Education who are responsible for this grant program have been very open to our involvement in the whole process. The DOE gave us the opportunity to review and comment upon the RFP before it was distributed to districts. In fact, they even welcomed our work in promoting it among key constituency groups – superintendents, school committees and the like. We co-hosted a convention of all the 14 grantees in November to help districts jumpstart the process of thinking about how they could develop plans for converting schools to a longer day and year. At the convening, we described our research – the research I shared with you earlier – and also helped to put together panels of experts to speak to the fourteen districts about the different factors they needed to be thinking about, including labor-management relations and what an extended-time schedule might look like. Finally, the DOE has been very open to Mass 2020 serving as the official technical assistance provider to the 14 districts. We have a team working

on this effort, including one staff member who has many years of experience working with schools on comprehensive school reform who has worked closely with each of the districts. She has coached them through the process to make their application and, in turn, their plans better, all with the blessing of the DOE. The districts appreciate the help we are able to bring to them and we appreciate the role that DOE has allowed us to play.

Before you go away thinking things are just swimming along, I want to assure you that, like any movement that seeks to upset the *status quo* in education, we face significant – almost dishearteningly significant – challenges. I detailed some of the current ones a few minutes ago, but let me describe the problems we know we have moving forward. First, in the next few months, we have to make sure that districts are actually able to put together sound plans and then to implement them fully come September. The reasons why these plans are so hard to develop and then implement vary from district to district, but the underlying one is that change is hard, especially in institutions that are so set in their ways.

A second challenge, as I indicated earlier, is funding. Not only getting funding for this year's implementation, which is hard enough, but making sure that this funding is automatic for the districts in the years to come. Can you just imagine making districts going through this whole tough process, having them be rewarded for their efforts with an influx of state money for the 2006 – 2007 school year, only to find it yanked away from them in the next year? That is a situation we simply cannot allow to happen.

Third, it is one thing to have a plan and put in place. It is quite another to see these changes produce the improved learning outcomes that we are expecting. How do we make sure that schools operate on a continuous improvement model so that this momentous change of extended time doesn't become stultifying itself, that they are never satisfied and always seeking to improve their practices, while not absolving themselves of responsibility for making

sure the “here and now” is as good as it can be? Not an easy message to deliver and that much harder to make real.

Finally, we have to evaluate these schools and students at the schools with sufficient depth and nuance that we can show the rest of the nation that extended time can work and how. In the course of our research, we found many, many supporters of the extended-time model at the schools experiencing it. But right now these schools are isolated islands of innovation.

Which brings me to my final point before I take questions. Changing the *status quo* in the education world is hard, hard work. You know that. When it comes to matters of the school calendar – the issue that has brought me here, you see how convention has become edict, how common practice has moved way beyond comfort to become conviction. How we work to undo these convictions and replace them with new, fresher conceptions of how schooling should be conducted is a long, hard slog. Sure, the logic and evidence are clear that changing the way the time for learning is structured is the right and necessary thing to do if we ever hope to close the achievement gap and to live up to the high standards of learning we have set for *all* of our children.

Yet, despite the persuasive case we can make, moving from concept to implementation, from vision to reality, takes more than strong arguments and top-notch research. It takes persistence and creativity, dedication and cunning. And I hope you can see that we need outside groups like yours – and mine – to be both agitators and conveners at once, to take the risks that few districts or schools could take on their own and to offer the support and vision that few schools or districts could muster. Our efforts will undoubtedly bring its share of defeats and will inevitably court resistance among those we believe should be our friends, but such hurdles should not sway us. We must always look to the future to see that our work

cannot be complete until all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Thank you.

*This speech was co-written with Dr. David Farbman, Massachusetts 2020 Research Director.*

**Jennifer Davis**

Co-Founder and President

Massachusetts 2020

One Beacon Street, 34<sup>th</sup> Floor

Boston, MA 02108

(617) 723-6747, ext. 3923

[jennifer@mass2020.org](mailto:jennifer@mass2020.org)

**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Alexander, K. L., D. R. Entwisle, et al. (2001). "Schools, Achievement and Inequality: A Seasonal Perspective." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 23(2): 171-191.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Carroll, "A Model of School Learning," *Teachers College Record*, 64:8, 1963, 723-33.