

# CTU Quest Center Report

## Extending the School Day DOES NOT Improve Achievement

During a recent event featuring CTU President Karen Lewis and CPS CEO Jean Claude Brizard, Brizard referenced the Massachusetts Extended Learning Time (ELT) experiment. His claim was that ELT proved that longer school days lead to greater achievement. President Lewis politely challenged this claim. The actual results of the experiment are [here](#)<sup>1</sup>, in a report produced by ABT Associates and released in February 2011. This evaluation of all four years of the Massachusetts ELT concludes:

*“The student achievement results indicate no overall impact of ELT; nor do the various descriptive analyses suggest any meaningful patterns of achievement for the ELT schools relative to the matched comparison schools, the ELT schools’ respective districts, or the state as a whole”*

*“There were no statistically significant effects of ELT after one, two, or three years of implementation on MCAS student achievement test outcomes for 3rd, 4th, or 7th grade ELA; 4th, 6th, or 8th grade math; or 5th or 8th grade science.”*

In an August 26<sup>th</sup> presentation to principals, Brizard shows a slide on the impact of learning time, (see below) that contains the following flaws:

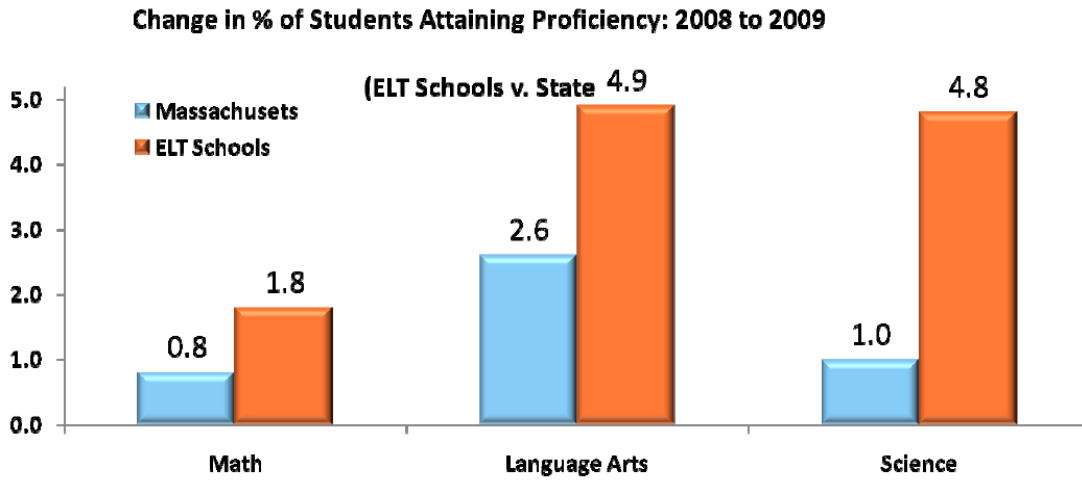
- The metric that CPS chooses to present, the change in percent of students attaining proficiency, is the worst metric to use for evaluation purposes. This metric tells us nothing about the growth in the achievement of all students, merely the change in the proportion that has exceeded the proficiency threshold. Schools can achieve these increases by focusing their efforts only on the students near the cutoff while completely ignoring every other student. This is the same criteria used in AYP under NCLB, and has been criticized countless numbers of times.
- The span of the metric is limited to only one year of change, from 2008 to 2009. The evaluation of the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative spans 4 years.
- The comparison of the ELT schools to the statewide average is a comparison that no sound evaluation would use to assess the impact of a program. The correct comparison would be to a group of schools that are similar to the ELT schools across a broad range of characteristics. In serious evaluations, these comparisons are further supplemented by statistical controls.

To see what the results of the Massachusetts ELT study actually showed, see the chart compiled by the evaluators of ELT, ABT Associates.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/FINAL\\_MA\\_EL\\_T\\_Report\\_Volume\\_I%20\\_2\\_16\\_11.pdf](http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/FINAL_MA_EL_T_Report_Volume_I%20_2_16_11.pdf)

## Analysis shows additional time has positive impact



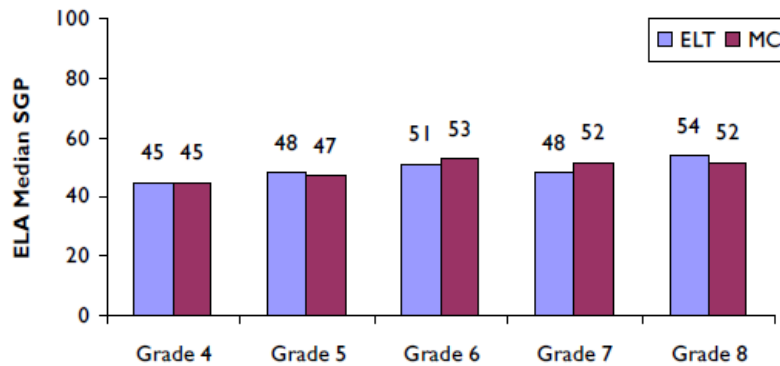
**In 2008-09, 22 ELT schools serving 12,000 students gained in proficiency at double the rate of the state in ELA and Math and gained at nearly five times the state in science**

Note: Viveiros Elementary School (Fall River) opened in 2009 and, thus, is excluded from the analysis.  
 Source: National Center for Time & Learning (Information was shared at 2009 Chicago Schools Policy Luncheon Series (<http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/assets/files/JDavis-ppt.pdf>))

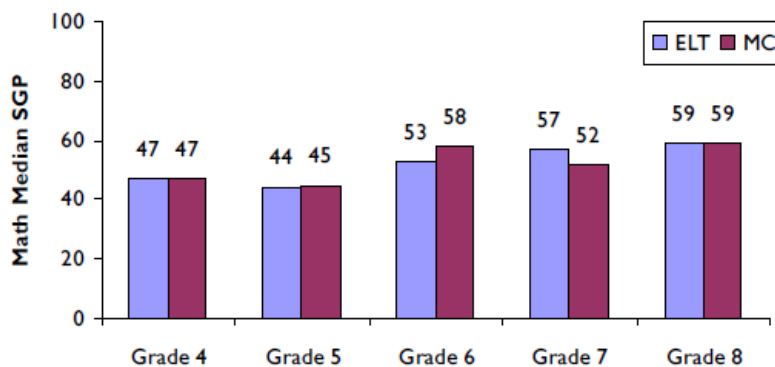
Figure 1. CPS: Lying with Numbers

Exhibit 6.5: ELT and Matched Comparison Median Student Growth by Grade, 2009-10

Panel 1: ELA



Panel 2: Math



**EXHIBIT READS:** In the 2009-10 school year, the median student growth percentile for ELA 4<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS results was 45 among students in ELT schools, and 45 among students in matched comparison schools  
Sample: Current ELT schools as of the 2009-10 school year, and their matched comparison schools.  
Source: Individual student records obtained from MA ESE

Figure 2. ABT ASSOCIATES: Student Growth Percentiles, ELT Schools and Matched Comparison Schools

Additionally, there is little evidence elsewhere that extended learning time leads to more learning<sup>2</sup>. In a literature survey of research on increased school time<sup>3</sup>, results from experiments with the most rigorous design are mixed: there is evidence of positive effects of additional school time for **pre-**

<sup>2</sup> Cuban, L. (2008, December). The Perennial reform: Fixing school time. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(4), 240–250.

<sup>3</sup> Patall, E., Harris Cooper, and Ashley Batts Allen “Extending the School Day or School Year: A Systematic Review of Research (1985-2009)” *Review of Educational Research*, September 2010 (Vol. 80, #3, p. 401-436)

**schoolers**<sup>4</sup>, no impact on at-risk kindergartners<sup>5</sup> and a positive impact for above average (magnet school) kindergartners<sup>6</sup>.

The other studies in the literature survey that matched students in extended time schools to traditional calendar students found positive effects from **a group of reforms**; the impact of additional school time alone was not measured.

Extended school time - longer school days, longer school year, or both -- has not been shown to have a systematically positive effect, nor are the results systematically higher for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The positive results - where some causal inference is reasonable - **seem to be limited to early childhood at the pre-school or kindergarten level**. The positive results are also driven by complementary reforms, such as better professional development and focused improvements of classroom environment.

A cross-international assessment of instructional time and student achievement found weak correlations of subject-specific hours, and total instructional time to test scores. The weak explanatory power of instructional time led researchers to list among the policy recommendations: "Do not waste resources in marginal increases in instructional time, as long as the system falls within world norms. If there is a choice between using resources to increase time versus improving teaching and the curriculum, give priority to the latter"<sup>7</sup>

The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative (ELT), used by Brizard and CPS as evidence for the positive impact of added instructional time on student achievement, is not set up well for causal inference about instructional time. This is because results may also be driven by complementary reforms such as better professional development and a focus on classroom environment improvements. Furthermore, as shown elsewhere in this document, an evaluation of four years of the program determined there was no impact on student achievement in general, and negative outcomes for some aspects<sup>8</sup>.

It has been suggested that the extra time on task that results from extended school time can also promote more efficient use of time so that teachers can provide in-depth lessons or have general-knowledge oriented activities. It is important to note that the greatest erosion to quality instructional time in Chicago schools comes from the hours spent on standardized testing and accompanying preparation. Educators have continuously stressed that prior to expanding school time districts should focus on ensuring that the current time on task involves meaningful instruction. "The crude policy solutions of more days in the year and longer school days do not even begin to touch the deeper truth that what has to improve is the quality of 'academic learning time'" (Cuban, 2008). Chicago can make meaningful improvements by looking at reforms that work and making our instructional time more valuable: decrease standardized testing and summative assessments, maintain intimate class sizes,

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<sup>4</sup> Robin, K. B. (2005). The effects of extended-day, extended-year preschool on learning in literacy and mathematics. (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3233695).

<sup>5</sup> Brown, M. E. M. (1998). A comparative study of the effectiveness of an extended year program for kindergartners (intervention, at risk, readiness) (Doctoral dissertation). Available from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9825653).

<sup>6</sup> Frazier, J. A., & Morrison, F. J. (1998). The influence of extended-year schooling on growth of achievement and perceived competence in early elementary school. *Child Development*, 69, 495–517.

<sup>7</sup> Baker, David P., Rodrigo Fabrega, Claudia Galindo and Jacob Mishook. "Instructional time and national achievement: cross-national evidence" *prospects*, vol. 34, no. 3, September 2004.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix A for our expanded critique of Brizard's gross misrepresentation of the results.

support early childhood programs for all, and provide creative curricula and time for recess that engage and refresh children's minds.

Policy makers and elected officials without an education background often push blindly for silver-bullet reforms like expanding school time because the true leg work in educational improvements requires commitment, resources, and understanding that the cycle of politics does not have room for.

### **Appendix: Evaluation Methods and Examples, Massachusetts Extended Learning Time:**

One of the comparisons in the report used Student Growth Percentiles (SGP). This metric is useful because it takes into account the growth of all student achievement by comparing each student's performance growth to other students with a similar performance history. The evaluators compared the Median SGP, by grade and subject in the fourth year of implementation for the ELT schools to several groups of comparison schools. The median SGP is interpreted as follows: *"if the group has a median SGP above 50, then that group of students, on average, improved in performance more than had their academic peers"*.

**There were no differences in this comparison.** The graph depicting the results is given in Figure 2.

Another type of analysis compared the performance level of students by grade and year in ELT schools to other schools in their districts, and other schools in the state. The only statistically significant results were the lower performance in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading for ELT schools (by -.15 standard deviations) and the higher performance of 6<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics (by .17 standard deviations).

The evaluation of the non-academic outcomes also gives reason for concern about the ELT program. Some of these results are:

- Teachers were challenged by lack of planning time and "students felt fatigue, behavioral issues, inability to complete homework, or inability to participate in activities outside of school" (pg. 5 and 84)
- "Statistically significantly fewer students in ELT schools reported that: they learned a lot in school; they liked being at their school; they looked forward to going to school; they felt safe while at school; and that most kids at their school liked being there, than would be estimated without ELT." (pg. 98)
- Fewer ELT students reported that teachers have time to provide extra help with school work when needed (pg. 98)