

DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Redesigning the School Day

Jennifer Davis • November 2009

Topic: Increased Learning Time: Beyond the Regular School Day
Practice: Structure Time

Highlights

- The president and cofounder of Massachusetts 2020 explains the rationale and goals behind the Expanded Learning Time initiative.
- This initiative adds 300 hours to the academic year of Massachusetts students in participating schools.
- The school day redesign has been supported by strategic partnerships, student data, and research-based instructional strategies to ensure maximum impact.

About the Interviewee or Site

Jennifer Davis is the cofounder and president of Massachusetts 2020, a nonprofit foundation founded in 2000 with a goal of expanding educational and economic opportunities for children and families across Massachusetts. Massachusetts 2020 currently focuses chiefly on efforts to expand and improve learning opportunities for Massachusetts' children during out-of-school time. Over the past five years, Massachusetts 2020 has been a lead partner in launching eight major initiatives: Boston's After-School for All Partnership, the largest public-private partnership dedicated to children in Boston's history; the Keeping Kids on Track Statewide

Campaign, in partnership with the five largest United Way organizations in Massachusetts; the statewide Middle School Initiative, in partnership with Citizen Schools and several funders; the Transition to Success Pilot, which documented the academic impact of six after-school programs; the School Sites Initiative, expanding after-school programs in 17 Boston schools; the Literacy Coaching Initiative in Boston, supporting 21 after-school programs; the Partners for Student Success initiative, with Boston Public Schools; and Boston Beyond, focused on providing children in low-performing schools with in-school and after-school enrichment and support programming and services. In 2004, Massachusetts 2020 launched its most ambitious initiative to date, a research and policy effort to restructure public schools to extend their day.

Full Transcript

This is Jennifer Davis. I am the cofounder and president of Massachusetts 2020, in Boston, Massachusetts. And in 2005, my organization partnered with the State Department of Education and the Governor's Office and the legislature to launch an initiative which is the state's first policy initiative and the first policy initiative in the nation to expand learning time for students—all students in the school—by at least 300 hours for the schools identified for participation.

The Expanded Learning Time Initiative focuses on flexible and innovative redesign, where participating schools and districts develop their goals, they review data to identify what their school needs are, and they work on staffing plans and budgets and labor agreements in a flexible and innovative way with local autonomy, allowing them to drive the process. And this process in and of itself has been extremely important to schools because it's built a buy-in among the faculty, union representatives, the school leadership, families, and school partners that are participating in the redesign process, and that process has changed the culture of schools in and of itself. So the process itself has been very important and then the end result—a new school day, with significantly more time, at least 300 more hours, redesigned thoughtfully to achieve significant outcomes for students—has really had an impact across the board in all the schools that are participating.

Massachusetts 2020 partners with the State Department of Education in Massachusetts to provide support to schools throughout the process as they are designing their new plans, as they are adding time, they are building their new schedules, as they are rethinking teaching and learning and core subjects and beyond. In some cases, specialized coaches are brought in to support particular areas. In all cases, schools are given support around the use of data-driven approaches to improving teaching and learning. Many schools are given extra support around structuring their professional development for teachers because all schools have added time in three areas: added time for core academic subjects; added time for teachers to participate in quality professional development, to review data, and to be coached in a variety of areas where they need support; and thirdly, around enrichment opportunities for students. And so between the state and Massachusetts 2020, we provide support in all of those areas to ensure that the added time is maximized to

the benefit of students and the school.

Schools participating in the Expanded Learning Time Initiative are required to submit an application first for a planning grant from the state and then develop an implementation plan, which has to be approved by the state. And it's become very competitive in Massachusetts for schools. They have to put together a really first-class quality plan that is showing that the added resources and added time is going to really benefit student achievement. There is also a six-year evaluation that's being done by an independent evaluation firm, and every year the school has to reapply for implementation funding.

In addition to the financial resources, technical support through a variety of means, including partnerships with higher education institutions around professional development for teachers to a variety of partnerships that either provide students' supports like apprenticeships or art and music in a broad array of access to museums and other community opportunities. So there is a variety of supports being made available to these schools that are participating in this initiative.