

Comprehensive Exam Question #1:

Education research has found social and cultural issues to be of great significance in the life prospects and opportunities of youth, both in and out of school. More specifically, research has addressed issues of school success from a number of perspectives and in terms of a wide range of variables, including race, class, gender, language, sexuality, and ethnicity. Fewer studies have examined the perspectives of youth on schooling, but there is growing awareness that the voices of youth need to be listened to and heard. Please address the issue of youth perspectives on schooling and discuss educational research into one or more social and cultural issues that offer understanding for ways of improving the life prospects of youth today. In your response, please include discussion of theoretical frameworks of research as well as findings of research.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 1

Jonathan Kozol (1991) commented in the introduction to *Savage Inequalities* that “the voices of children...have been missing from the whole discussion” of education. I couldn’t agree more. As education has moved toward a more progressive and constructivist paradigm, the recognition of the learner as one who has the power to construct meaning has continued to be emphasized, yet the research methods employed to study education often ignore the student. In the last twenty years there has been a call to authorize students’ perspectives and to “reconfigure power dynamics and discourse practices within existing realms of conversation about education”(Cook-Sather, 2002, p.3). If researchers continue to exclude, or only superficially address, student voice when examining the effects of education, reform efforts will be based on representations from the dominant perspective, thereby marginalizing those who walk the halls of the school every day. This paper emphasizes the importance of the student in the learning process, explores traditional notions of who has power in education, and calls for research methods which engage and authorize students’ perspectives as critical to informing educational policy, practice and reform.

Constructivism and progressive philosophies of education are a reaction to didactic behaviorist approaches toward education which view learning as programmed and the learner as relatively inconsequential in the equation. Early 20th century thinking and the behaviorists such as Skinner (1969) saw the teacher as a

skilled engineer. There was a prescribed way of approaching education, a formula if you will, of what needed to be inputted to create a desired output. The historical images of students may have dehumanized students and reduced them to products. Other progressive educators such as Dewey argued that children were more than empty vessels. Dewey (1964) rejected the idea that children are tabula rasa, blank slates, and called for child-centered education. The basis of child-centered education is that we must start “where the learner is” by designing experiences where students build and construct their own knowledge (Bruner, 1977, p xi). Constructivist approaches to pedagogy give students “the opportunity to explore their ideas and make sense of them.”(Duckworth, 1987). Constructivists believe that teachers can improve their practice by listening closely to what students say about their learning. The assumption for the assessment of student learning, according to constructivists, like myself, is that students play a significant role in judging their own progress. While constructivist notions of education place the learner at the center of education, many educational studies ignore or discount the perspectives of the learner toward their own learning, their learning environment or education reform.

Beresford(1999) argues that the interest of examining students perspectives toward their schooling arose partly from a growing focus on consumers' rights which in education represented those of students as well as their parents. Beresford postulates in order to address the needs of the learner, we must first understand the learner’s view. In the 1990’s, a growing body of literature began to develop on students’ view on education. (Andersson 1996, Beresford, 1999, Blum 1997, Centre for Successful Schools 1990,Cooper and Fielding 1998, Davies and Ellison 1995,Levin 1995, Maden and Rudduck 1997, Rudduck et al. 1996, Osborn 1997, Restructuring Collaborative 1997, Smees and Thomas 1998, Wallace and Wildy 1996). The studies have demonstrated that capturing student voice is important, although too often not done. Since school reform is undertaken on behalf of students, it seems obvious that students should be an important focus when examining school reform. Yet, there are many books and articles focusing on school reform in the new millennium that are silent on the views

of students. Giroux (1992) indicates that students “have been silenced all their lives”(p. 158). The silence is deafening.

Critical theorists believe there is an unequal stratification in society based upon class, race and gender. Those of high status and high power in society control, either directly or indirectly, those of lower status and power. Friere, who most consider the father of critical pedagogy wrote in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) , “Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence;... to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects”(p. xx). Friere would argue that students should be more than objects or benevolent beneficiaries of education. Critical pedagogy studies the roles schools play in maintaining oppression of the lower status and those with less power. While somewhat simplistic and perhaps requiring a paper unto itself, I contend that adults may very well be viewed as the oppressors in contemporary education and students the oppressed. Allison Cook-Sather (2002) contends that adults basically distrust young people and insist in being in control of education, which essentially dehumanizes students. Critical theory supports giving power to students’ voice by emphasizing students’ needs, values, and individuality. Critical theory seeks to engage students to become full participatory members of a society. Friere (1970) would encourage educational leaders to avoid imposing decisions on students without engaging students. He stated "Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people--they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress."(p.xx)

There are more recent researchers who have portrayed students as articulate, sophisticated observers of school life. Nieto (1994) found that even students who were on the margins of engagement with school are able to articulate events, circumstances and interaction which contributed to their construction of school as an unpleasant place. Poplin and Weeres (1992), in *Voices from the Inside*, a report of their study of California schools further describe how essential engaging students in the conversation around their school experiences “

For it is in coming to know that we came to want to act. It is in the listening that we are changed. It is in the hearing our own students speak, as if for the first time, that we came to believe.” P. 19.

In 1997, Wasley, Hampel and Clark published their book *Kids and School Reform*, which highlighted students from five schools’s associated with Coalition of Essential Schools, a network of school’s stemming from ideas developed by TheodoreSizer (1984). The underlying questions for their book is: When adults make far-reaching changes in schools, what differences ensue for their students? When do new instructional methods truly improve student learning? And, when do these changes yield little or nothing for kids? The authors did a series of observations, interviews of students, parents, and adults in schools over the course of three years. They applied a grounded theory method of research. Wasley, Hampel and Clark (1997) indicate, “Rather than formulating a theory that offers a potential answer to a question, which researchers then proceed to prove or disprove, grounded theorists go in search of answers without predicting. This enables them to consider a wide range of possibilities” (p.238). When examining the school reform, they listened to kids and saw little results of the reform on the students.

Wilson and Corbett’s *Listening to Urban Kids* (2001), has a simple premise “If substantial reforms to improve what and how students learn actually occur in schools, then students’ descriptions of their classroom experiences should reflect those changes. Reform in other words, should be noticeable by what kids say about school.”(p.1) Regardless of the students understanding of the specifics of the reform or the adult language used to describe it, what students say they do, say their teachers do, and say happens in school should be reflective of the implemented reform. The authors operated on the assumption that if “something” was going on, they would hear it from the students through student interviews. Like Wasley, Hampel and Clark (1997), the authors concluded that listening to students was an important part of planning, implementing, and adjusting school reform.

There has to be a place in school reform for students as participants and not just beneficiaries. Fullan (1991) makes distinctions between students as “beneficiaries” and “participants”. Fullan indicates “ When adults do think of students, they think of them as the potential beneficiaries of change....They rarely think of students as participants in a process of change and organizational life.” If educators believe that students are participants, then they must find ways of directly involving students in implementation of reform and in helping understand the impacts of organizational change and reform. Fullan (1991) indicates that educational change is a people phenomenon and reminds us that students are people too. Fullan challenges the reader: “What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in school?”(p. 170). This is a profound question with a relatively simple answer in my estimation - we would value student perspectives!

A concern from teachers and administrators when researcher’s exam students’ perspectives is that students’ views may be complaints and gripes which could lead to public criticism of the adults (teachers and administrators). Flutter (2006) dismisses several concerns of involving students in obtaining students’ views in the involvement and design of changed learning environment. “Time, costs and other practical matters have often been cited as obstacles for student participation, but these are not insurmountable difficulties and, as we have seen, the potential benefit for students , schools and society should outweigh their constraints.”(p.191). Beyond the logistical difficulties, perhaps the fear of what kids might say is the major reason why many adults just don’t ask. It is true that students’ only see a small piece of the reform picture. However, their small piece is important. Wilson & Corbett (2001) also concede that the students do not have all the answers. However, educators must ask students what they want and need. Asking these questions in every context is important since student answers are contextually specific. Pedro Noguera (2006) argues that adults have to be willing to hear what the students actually think and respect them enough to learn and listen. They don’t need to know everything that is happening district wise, state-wide or even school wide, but what they do notice and can

articulate about their experiences is important. And, it is the adults role to take their ideas and translate it into effective practice, thereby rebalancing the power dynamic of adults and students in schools.

Pedro Noguera (2006) contends that in schools where decision making is done in a top-down fashion without teacher and student input, change is unlikely to remain. Lasting change can only occur if stakeholders are engaged. Further, education needs to engage in discourse from all stakeholders to redistribute power to students. Heilbrun (1988) contends, "Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter. (Heilbrun, 1988). Delpit (1988) further points out that the first step in listening is to stop talking and stop assuming we know all the answers. Friere (1998) encourages educators "to speak by listening".

Fielding (2001) goes a step further by not only listening to students' perspectives but by outlining four levels of student involvement: students as data sources; students as active co-respondents; students as co-researchers; students as student researchers. The rationale for using students as data sources is that schools need to understand students' perceptions toward their learning in order to teach effectively. The most ideal and inclusive way engaging students is to have students as co-researchers, who develop the questions and approaches to examining learning and educational reform.

The concept, language, and structures of education is primarily based on adults' ideas about the conceptualization and practice of education. Adults develop, tear-down, and the reform education, often without considering student perspectives. Do adults know more about education than students? Allison Cook-Sather (2002) contends "It is time that we count students among those with authority to participate both in the critique and in the reform of education". At the root of giving students the authority to participate is power. Ellsworth (1992) points out that there are power dynamics within and outside of school that make this discourse challenging. Allison Cook-Sather further states "authorizing student perspectives means ensuring that there are

legitimate and valued spaces within which students can speak, re-tuning our ears so that we can hear what they say, and redirecting their action in response to what we hear.”(p. 12).

I was brave enough to ask my then middle school nephew how things were going at school on day. He said “ I see things you can’t even imagine.” I believe it, which is why I believe we need to find ways to empower students to speak and be willing to sublimate our power as adults to really hear what they have to say.

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RESPONSE FROM EXAMINER A - PASS

Excellent job on addressing youth perspectives on schooling, including relevant research and philosophical foundations (and to some degree, theory). I was unclear, however, as to the "social and cultural issue" that Kris

was using in her response (i.e., 2nd part of the prompt that starts with "Please address the issue of...."). While my recommendation is "PASS," I would like to hear more about the 2nd part in the oral.

RESPONSE FROM EXAMINER B – PASS

I find a good range of sources and good examples of different perspectives in this response. I am suggesting some additional things to think about for the Oral Examination.

First: Can you place the varied voices from different positions or locations in the educational landscape? Are they from theory, philosophy, research? Can you distinguish between research to support the notion of the importance of students' voices in education reform from philosophical or theoretical perspectives?

Second: You mention Beresford's (1999) suggestion that interest in examining students' perspectives toward their schooling "arose partly from a growing focus on consumers' rights in education" (p. 2). Are there other origins that you can identify?

Third: In your discussion of a Freirean perspective, you mention that students should be more than "benevolent beneficiaries of education." Is it possible to put this perspective into a larger framework of the history of the "helping professions"? (I'm thinking here that your background in social work might offer insights to bring to this discussion).

Fourth: In your discussion, you didn't focus specifically on the issue of the age of students in relation to the issue of students' perspectives. I wonder if you have any thoughts—or if you've seen any research—on the range of ages of students who could or should have a voice in their schooling? Are there limits, and if so, what, how, and why?

Comprehensive Exam Question 2

As explained to members of your doctoral committee, you are interested in studying expanded learning time initiatives using a “mixed methods” research design. While there are many facets of such initiatives that can be explored, state a primary empirical question that you would like to investigate. Articulate a detailed methodological design for researching this question that employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Provide rationales for each choice you make in your methodological design, and the selection of each research method.

Inherent in using a mixed methods design are questions about methodological assumptions that might be seen as incongruent. Discuss why such questions about potential methodological incongruency arise. Finally, conclude with an analysis of both the benefits and the limitations for investigating the empirical question you identified with a mixed methods design.

Answer for Comprehensive Exam Question 2

I propose conducting a study titled: Time for Learning: Examining students’ perceptions toward learning in Expanded Learning Time reform. Cornett and Blumm (1993) assert that school systems should “think first about students” before implementing education reform. Schumacker and Brookside (1992) report that a number of school superintendents selected “student attitude information” as one of the two quality indicators for successful schools. The primary questions which I will be exploring are: 1a. What are students’ attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time (ELT) School?; 1b. What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time?; and 1c.. How do these experiences and attitudes compare to students in a non-ELT school? While I do have other secondary questions that I plan to explore related to principal’s beliefs, I will focus my response on the primary questions stated above, as directed by the comprehensive examination question. I propose using a mixed-methods design to explore these questions, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data and integrating the findings to better understand student perspectives in the expanded learning time initiative. Selection of an appropriate research method should depend on the question asked and the study to be conducted. Qualitative methods have become engrained in evaluation of curricula, programs and education reform (Patton, 1980). The purpose of mixed methods is to build on the synergy and strength that exists between the quantitative and qualitative methods-the best of both of both worlds, if you will. However, there is potential for methodological incongruence and critique. A good mixed-methods analysis wades through

the messiness to develop integrated knowledge. I will first outline the methodological approach planned using as much detail, description and explanation of the rationale for every choice made along the way and then analyze the benefits and challenges of using mixed methods

This mixed methods study examines the implementation of ELT in one school district, exploring 8th grade student perspectives in a middle school with ELT compared to a similar middle school without the ELT initiative. The selected middle schools within the district serve as two cases which will be compared and contrasted using multiple data sources.

The study adheres to the pragmatist philosophies of Pierce, James and Dewey by mixing research methods to provide evidence that meets the standard of what Dewey (1938) called “warranted assertability.” Dewey spoke of “warranted assertability” rather than universal truths. Dewey would argue that inquiry is a dynamic process by which research conclusions and knowledge are warranted through examining the ongoing, self-correcting accumulation of context rather than examining a static picture or seeking a universal truth.

The fundamental principle of mixed research is strategically mixing or combining qualitative and quantitative methods to provide complementary strengths and minimizing overlapping weaknesses (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Webb et. Al. 1981). Combining qualitative and quantitative research will produce integrated knowledge.

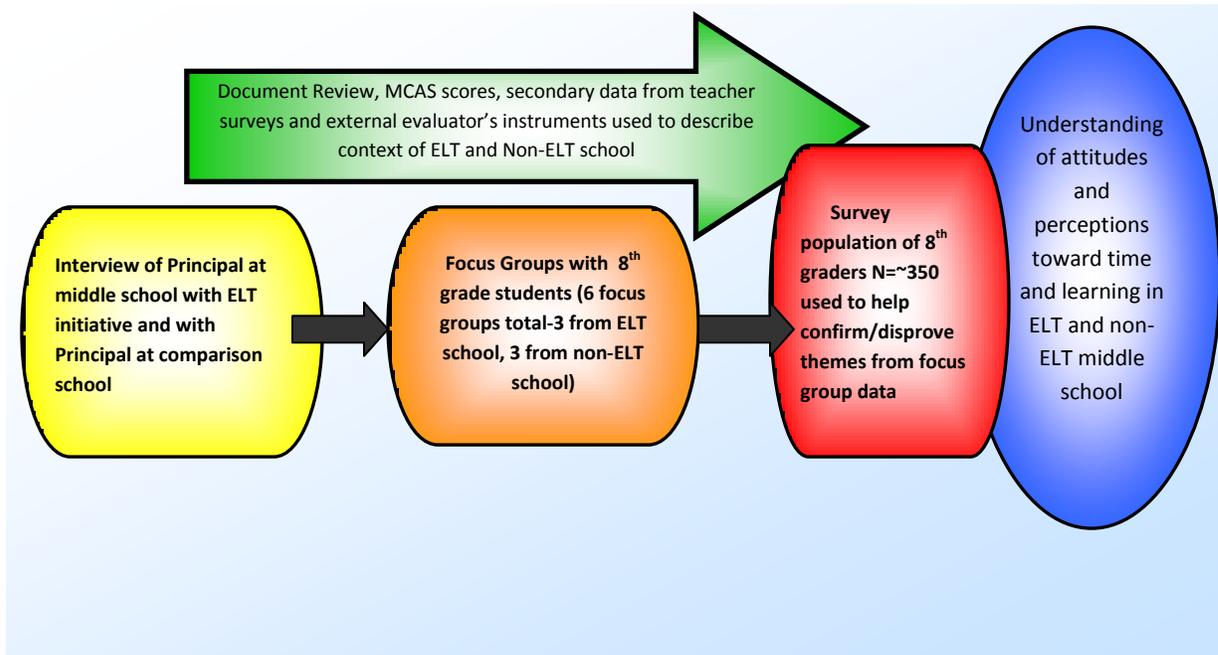
Qualitative research designs in methods are an important source of knowledge for implementation researchers (Honig, 2006). Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). Honig (2006) conducted a qualitative case study to examine implementation of four collaborative policies in a single school district. Her methodology involved triangulating data from observations, semi-structured interviews, and record data. This approach is consistent with the approach recommended by Yin (1989) and Miles and Huberman (1994) and the approach used in this study which uses thematic analysis triangulated by the data sources.

Within this mixed-methods study are two cases. Case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data through a triangulated research strategy of data sources or methods (Yin, 1984). Yin (1994) presents at least four applications for a case study: 1) to explain complex causal links in real-life interventions; 2) to describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred; 3) to describe the intervention itself; and, 4) to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes. This study attempts to address applications two and three. Specifically, this study will describe the Expanded Learning Time Initiative as implemented in one school by examining integrated contextual factors, perceptions and attitudes.

Honig (2006) outlines new approaches to implementation research in comparison to traditional methods of inquiry. She describes traditional implementation research generally concluding that policy, people, and places affect implementation, whereas more contemporary implementation research examines how policy, people and places shape implementation. Current researchers in implementation research study the interactions of people, place and policy in a way of making sense of implementation as it unfolds by using a combination of field notes, interviews and videotapes to collect data (Kemp, Tzou, & Spillane, 2002; Reiser et al., 2000; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren, 2004).

This study uses multiple sources of data and methods. The primary focus is capturing the student perspectives. Their perspectives will be captured through a series of semi-structured focus groups, followed by a student survey of the population of 8th graders used to test the themes developed as a result of the focus groups. The researcher will also be conducting document review and use of secondary data sources collected by the school system and the external evaluators for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as principal interviews in the two schools. The research design is presented in Figure 1.

Research Design



Using the mixed methods typology described by Johnson and Christensen (2008), this study is categorized as QUAL→quan, or a dominant-status sequential design. The qualitative component is dominant and occurs before the quantitative, survey data collection. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) call the QUAL-Quan Model the exploratory mixed methods design. Qualitative data are collected first and are more heavily weighted than quantitative data. The qualitative phase involves observations and/or individual and group interviews where potential hypothesis or themes emerge. In the second phase of the study, variables which emerged from the qualitative data are examined with quantitative techniques. “When qualitative methods are dominant, qualitative researchers may decide to include survey, census, Likert-scale data along with the narrative data; the validity of the qualitative results can be enhanced by the quantitative results”(Gay, Mills, Airasian, 2009).

The study examines 8th graders at two similar middle schools within a small urban city in Massachusetts, one of which has expanded the school day by 30%. Principals at each of the middle schools will be interviewed at the beginning of the study to understand the leaders’ perceptions of time and learning and used to describe the context of each of school.

Next, three focus groups of 8th graders at each of the schools will occur. A survey of the population of 8th graders of each school will follow the focus groups to further test themes developed as a result of the qualitative data collected. Document review of secondary data, evaluative reports and plans will occur to provide contextual detail to the study. Principals will be interviewed again at the end of the study to share preliminary findings and to hear the leaders' interpretations and impressions related to the data.

Setting and Participants

Pseudonyms are used in place of the schools, school district, and city in this study. The Small City Public School District (Small City) located in Massachusetts is selected purposively as the study setting. Small City is the first district in Massachusetts to expand learning time in a middle school under the state's ELT initiative. The John Jones Middle School (Jones), grades 6-8, expanded the school day by 30% beginning in the 2006-2007 school year. In the year preceding the reform effort, Jones was one of only two middle schools across the state of Massachusetts to be named chronically, underperforming and slated for state take-over. The media and the State now portray Jones as an example of what can go right when ELT is implemented. Small City spent a year planning for the expanded school day by examining their current uses of time and examining the quality of instruction and teachers. Small City claims to have added academic learning time which engages students through quality instruction and student selection of special electives. They claim to have a stable teaching staff and are several years into the reform which contributes to a high degree of implementation saturation and maturation. Fidelity of reform implementation appears strong.

The Paul Peterson Middle School (Peterson) will be used as the comparison school in the study. Of the three other middle schools located in Small City, the Peterson is most similar to Jones on student and teacher demographics and student performance.

The study is limited to 8th grade students to control for dosage. Eighth grade students have the most experience in their respective schools. Eighth grade students also have the expressive and receptive literacy necessary for participation in the focus group and student surveys. One of the first signs of adolescence is

reflectivity, or analyzing one's own mind and self. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, adolescents have the cognitive ability to relate past and present and to think about their future and understand the continuity of experience across time. Since this study focuses on student perspectives which require a fair degree of reflectivity, I felt it essential to focus on the 8th graders.

Finally, a middle school focused study is needed, since the majority of time and learning studies, to date, have focused on the elementary level.

Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

Document Review

The researcher will review the following documents and secondary data made available by the schools: ELT planning grant, ELT implementation plan, teacher survey results, MCAS data, other data and documents available through the external evaluator. The purpose of the document review is to provide context for describing the Jones and Peterson schools and the Small City School District and to give the researcher necessary background information to develop the questions for the focus groups, survey, and interviews.

Principal Interviews

The principals of Jones and Peterson will be interviewed in the early phase of the study and then again after the survey portion of the study. Prior to the implementation of the focus groups, a 45-minute semi-structured interview will be conducted focused on the following three questions: What is the structure of the school day? What do you believe is the relationship between time and learning? In what ways are students engaged in making decisions about their learning at school? Follow up questions will be focused on elucidating specific examples. The first interview will be used to examine the sub-research questions: What are principals' beliefs related to time and learning, and, ? Are the principals' beliefs related to time and learning reflected in the school day and students' reported experiences? The second interview will take place after all other data collection is complete to gather feedback related to themes uncovered in the first principal interviews and the student focus groups. Principal interviews will be audio taped.

Focus Groups

Three focus groups of 8th grade students in each of the middle schools will be conducted. The focus groups will be used to develop themes related to the research questions: What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School? What do students perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time? How do these experiences and attitudes compare to students in a non-ELT school?

There will be five-six participants in each of the 30 minute focus groups. Barbour and Kitinger (1999) recommend focus group researchers in social science work with five to six participants who have a shared experience, yet are heterogeneous in some ways to highlight differences in experiences. Students must volunteer and have parental consent forms signed in order to participate. Students will be recruited to participate through the use of flyers distributed by teachers in homeroom. Of the volunteers returning consent forms, participants will be purposively placed in a focus group which best meets their scheduling needs. Groups will be of mixed –gender. The focus groups will be audio and video taped and take place during lunch period in an unoccupied classroom within the respective school. Lunch will be provided during the focus group and students will return to class immediately following the focus group.

Focus group sessions will be semi-structured using the same open-ended question-starters for each focus group. Questions will be very broad and may include: What is learning? How do you know that you have learned something? What people, situations, or approaches help you learn most? Do you have enough time to meet your learning objectives? For ELT students: How do you perceive the expanded learning time has impacted you?

The advantage to focus groups over individual interviews is that they are efficient in terms of time and often helpful to encourage interaction among peers and enhance a deeper discussion among adolescents. There is not extensive literature on interviewing kids, and even less on interviewing kids in groups. Galen, Hare and Noblit (1986) describe that they have successfully conducted group interviews with kids to minimize cost and time, although they concede the group interview strays away from traditional qualitative methods of studying

individuals in the natural setting. Yet, if there is a focused group of questions and the group members have a degree of homogeneity, then the group interview can be very useful. A challenge of conducting the group interview with kids is that there will have to be a conscious effort at managing the group. Children do not know interview standards, rules or etiquette. I'll also need to be very cautious that children do not see the interview as a testing situation. Interviewing kids is an art. I plan to utilize the broad focus group interview protocol structure proposed by Galen, Hare, and Noblit (1986): I. Introduce self, purpose of study, why we are here; II. Set the task III. Outline the rules of a focus group interview IV. Ask Orientation Questions V. Conduct the Interview VI. Ask if there is anything else they want to share V. Thank Students. As someone who was trained as a licensed social worker, I'll undoubtedly use all the skills gained in implementing adolescent psycho-educational groups in managing the interview. While individual interviews, coupled with observations, would obviously be another very good way at understanding students' perspectives, it is not the method chosen for this study.

Student Survey

Once the focus groups have been analyzed and themes emerge, the researcher will develop a survey instrument to confirm indications, thoughts, and themes within the larger student demographic (8th graders at both the ELT and non-ELT school). The survey instrument will be a researcher developed tool. While it is known the focus of the questions will be on the ELT initiative, the exact focus and questions will be determined as a result of themes which emerge as a result of the focus groups and document review.

ABT Associates, the external evaluator for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) has developed and implemented a student survey titled, ELT Student Survey, to report students' perspectives related to time and learning. The survey was implemented to a random sample of Massachusetts students. However, individual district results and data were not given; nor are they available to districts since the purpose of the survey was to evaluative statewide perspectives. The researcher developed survey will include select questions from the ELT Student Survey for the core questions on the survey, adding additional questions, as appropriate. It is possible that some Small City

students may have taken part in the statewide ELT student survey in previous years, which could negatively impact the response rate as some students may feel less compelled to complete a survey that looks similar. However, the benefits of using some fully piloted questions will outweigh the negative impact on the study.

A pre-survey evaluation will occur through the means of a focus group of 5-7 volunteer middle school students, selected in the same manner as described in the focus group section above. The form of the pre-survey evaluation is a variation of the “think aloud” interview (Fowler, 1995). Pre-survey evaluators will be asked about the question-and-answer process as outlined by Fowler (1995):

1. Asking the respondents to paraphrase their understanding of the question
2. Asking respondents to define terms
3. Asking respondents for any uncertainties or confusions
4. Asking respondents how accurate they were when they gave an answer
5. If the question asked for a numerical figure, asking respondents to talk about the process of determining the answer

The survey instrument will be revised based on the results of the pre-survey evaluation.

The purpose of the survey is not for external generalization purposes; rather it is another data source in capturing and confirming student perspectives within Small City. The survey will tell us whether or not the themes which seemed to emerge from the focus groups and document review are consistent within the population at Small City. All 8th grade students (N~350) in Jones and Peterson schools will have the opportunity to complete the survey. The survey will be anonymous and confidential and contain a combination of open and closed questions. For data analysis purposes, open-ended questions will be kept to a minimum. The response rate is expected to be 80%. The high response rate is expected since the survey will be conducted during an extended homeroom and will be very brief. The researcher and four colleagues will survey Jones and Peterson students within the same week.

Data Collection Timeline

August, 2010	Principal Interviews (2)
October, 2010	(3) Focus Groups –Jones (ELT school) (3) Focus Groups- Peterson(comparison)
January, 2011	Pre-Survey Focus Group
February, 2011	ELT Student Survey of 8 th grade population at Jones and Peterson

Data Analysis

Focus group Analysis

Results from the first focus group may suggest topics to emphasize or include in later focus groups. Since focus group data is one of several sources of data for the study, transcription will not be verbatim, Transcriptions will include complete thoughts, but not highlight silences and background noises. Focus groups will be transcribed quickly to resolve ambiguities while the session is still fresh. Since multiple focus groups will be conducted, notes and transcripts will be reviewed to identify any additional topics to be pursued in the next focus group.

The researcher will code the transcribed focus group data according to a three-step procedure suggested by Bogdan and Biklin (1998). First, focus group transcripts will be read in their entirety at least twice. Next, the researcher will conduct an initial coding by generating numerous category codes, labeling data that are related without worrying about the variety of the thematic categories. The final step is focused coding to eliminate, combine, or subdivide coding categories, and look for repeating ideas and larger themes that connect codes. NVIVO qualitative software will be used to assist with the coding. Coding could be strengthened by adding one or two independent coders, thereby showing inter-rater reliability, however the practical complications of adding this time and expense may outweigh the benefit. This is particularly true in the case of this study, as there will also be a student survey that will serve to further validate the emergent themes.

Principal Interviews

Principal interviews will be transcribed using the same procedure as the student focus groups described above, as suggested by Bogdan and Bilkin (1998). Principal interviews are for the purpose of the secondary research questions.

Survey Analysis

Survey responses will be entered into an SPSS database and run for frequencies and additional analyses such as the Pearson Chi Square test on cross tabulations and T-tests reporting significant differences on survey responses by ELT vs. Non ELT participation. Missing data will be excluded from the analysis. In no means, are the data predictive or generalizable outside of the case school district. However, the survey will assist in confirming themes generated by the focus groups, principal interviews, and document review.

The multiple data sources will be used to provide an in-depth mixed-methods study of an ELT and non-ELT middle school within Small City, MA. The results of the study will be presented as follows: Context of Small City School District; Jones (ELT) Case study integrating principal interview, focus groups and survey data; Peterson (non-ELT) Case integrating principal interview, focus groups and survey data; Comparison of Jones and Peterson Cases .

Research Questions, Data Sources, Analysis Matrix

Research Question	Data Source(s)	Analysis/Results
What are students' attitudes toward time and learning in an Expanded Learning Time School?	3 Focus Groups of 8 th graders at ELT School (Jones); 3 Focus Groups of 8 th graders at Comparison school (Peterson) Student Survey; Document	Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts ; Student survey focused on emergent themes.

	Review	
What do students in an ELT school perceive to be the effects of expanded learning time?	3 focus groups of 8 th graders at ELT school (Jones), Student Survey; Document Review	Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts; Student survey focused on emergent themes.
How do these experiences and attitudes toward time and learning compare to students in a non-ELT school?	3 focus groups in comparison school (Peterson), Student Survey; Document review	Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts ; Student survey focused on emergent themes (T-tests, Chi Square)

Why mixed methods?

As Krathwohl (1998) noted “ Research , however is a creative act; don’t confine your thinking to specific approaches. Researchers creatively combine the elements of methods in any way that makes sense for the study they want to do. Their own limits are their own imagination and the necessity of presenting their findings convincingly. The research question to be answered really determines the methods.” (p.27). In this case, the research questions I proposed, combined with the strengths and limitations of the study setting, determined the methods I employ in the design.

Quantitative research methods are characterized by a deductive approach with an objective reality, focused on cause-effect relationships, testing hypothesis and selecting participants as randomly as possible in order to generalize the results. On the other hand, qualitative methods are characterized based on an inductive approach, focused on interpreting participants’ perspectives, focused on describing relationships, and purposefully selecting its participants based on their experience in the research setting. Quantitative research is more closely aligned with the behaviorist paradigm of examining phenomena into parts and stripping the

context of a situation to study an issue in its pure state. Qualitative research on the other hand considers the context to be critical and examines issues holistically. This crude presentation of the polarity of the methods may leave some wondering “How can a researcher possibly use these two diametrically opposed approaches to one study?”. It is completely possible, when you let your research question lead you, to end in a place where integrating both approaches is appropriate.

Evaluation, program, and policy research occurs in a tight timeline which involves using techniques that will maximize the quality and quantity of data collected in a minimum amount of time. Wiersman and Jurs (2009) identify that research in school settings, particularly those examining school reform projects are typically the types of projects for which mixed methods are best suited. The same issues in the general debate over quantitative and qualitative paradigms arise in discussion of mixed methods research. The purpose of mixed methods is to build on the synergy and strength of each method to understand the phenomenon more fully than using either of the methods on its own.

Among the purposes for mixed-method evaluation design, Green et al. (1989) highlight five major purposes: 1) triangulation, 2) complementarity, 3) development, 4) initiation, 5) expansion. Green uses **triangulation** to refer to using mixed methods to test the consistency of findings obtained through different methods. Frankell and Warren (in Merton, 2006) point out it is important to collect multiple measures on the variables of interest in the study. Collecting multiple measures encourages triangulation of measures. By examining student perspectives by first asking them what they think and feel and later testing the themes heard with the larger population, I'll be able to more fully feel confident in reporting the results of the student perspectives in the ELT reform versus the non-ELT reform. **Complementarity** clarifies and illustrates results from one method with the use of another method. In my case, the student survey results may illustrate more fully the result of the student focus groups. **Development** results from one method shape subsequent methods or steps in the research process. In our case, the pre survey focus group will help the shape the language and questions

to be included in the student survey. Additionally, the principle interviews and document review will give me important context necessary to best shape the focus group questions. **Initiation** stimulates new research questions or challenges results obtained through one method. In my case, the focus groups, principal interviews and student surveys will create an interesting interplay and challenge. The integration of the findings into a final cohesive narrative within the respective cases will be exciting, yet challenging since I have selected a mixed methods approach. **Expansion** provides richness and detail to the study exploring specific features of each method. In our case, integration of procedures mentioned above will expand the breadth of the study and likely give a bigger picture of students' perspectives in the Expanded learning Time Initiative.

Mixed methods approach is not without its limitations. First, it requires a comprehensive understanding of both approaches. The researcher must be able to understand and articulate both perspectives and respond to critiques of both. Further, the researcher must be careful not to mix the methods haphazardly. The selection of the methods and approaches must be thoughtful and consistent. As described above, this study using the QUAL-> quan typology, or exploratory mixed methods approach. I have presented a primarily qualitative research approach (case study) that uses mixed methods (focus groups-qualitative) and a survey (quantitative) to validate defined patterns which emerge from the focus groups. I have also used a "case control", matched comparison case to identify factors associated with not having the ELT initiative to answer my research question related to comparing perspectives of students in the ELT and Non ELT school. This approach is consistent with LeCompte and Schensul's (1999) description of the interaction of quantitative methods with qualitative research designs.

When dealing with a study that examines time and learning, I'd be remiss if I didn't consider time as a factor when employing methods. Lengthy methods will not be terribly helpful in understanding the students' perspectives about time and learning. The techniques I employ are less than perfect as they are confounded by efficiency and feasibility issues. However, the techniques employed are perhaps the most ideal to capture

student perspectives in a very dynamic environment. Other researchers who have examined student perspectives in relation to school reform have employed either individual interviews alone or mixed methods (focus groups and surveys). The researchers who have conducted individual interviews over a several years (Wasley, Hampel and Clark, 1997, and Wilson and Corbett, 2001), have rich narratives of 5 or 6 children over the course of many years. They study the students through observation and multiple interviews in their natural setting as many ethnographic approaches do so very well. Yet, those interested in school reform, are also very interested in knowing whether what is learned is important to the larger question of the reform. My study has as its audience school leaders who might be considering expanding the school day. For that reason, a completely qualitative approach may not be enough. Therefore, the survey data adds some support to the stories and themes which will emerge from the focus groups.

Some other contemporary researchers who look at school reform through student perspectives are approaching their studies similar to the way I have chosen to do so. In 2008, Spires, Lee, Turner and Johnson undertook a study to highlight middle school student perspectives about what they needed to be engaged in school settings. They used a large scale survey followed by focus group procedures and analysis. Yorkk-Barr, & Paulsen (1996) conducted a study of student perspectives of desired high school experiences and outcomes prior in the early phases of restructuring of a school. First three focus groups of students representing varied experiences in high school were facilitated to obtain in depth perspectives. Second, the questions used during the focus groups were modified and reformatted as a survey and disseminated to the entire high school population.

While mixed methods research has a great deal of use and benefit, particularly in relation to examining school reform, the approach is not without problems. The competing paradigms and those who are firmly in one camp or another will critique the interplay and messiness. The approach requires a level of purposiveness by

the researcher and the keen ability to integrate the knowledge in reporting the results in a way that those on either side of the paradigm can see value.

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RESPONSE FROM EXAMINER A - PASS

Most of the rationale for this study deals with the use of qualitative methods. I'd like to hear more about the strengths/benefits/issues related to the use of quantitative methods alongside the dominant qualitative method.

I'd like to hear more about both the benefits and the limitations for investigating the empirical question you identified with a mixed methods design—benefits and limitations which are specific to your study and not just to mixed methods in general.

I'd also like to hear more about the congruency of the assumptions behind the methodologies you propose

RESPONSE FROM EXAMINER B - PASS

Initially I was concerned that too much was being presented about the logistics of Kris' proposed dissertation research without supporting rationales, Kris did end up addressing the key ideas inherent in this question. The "Why mixed methods?" section was strong and provided support for her choices. My recommendation is "PASS."

Question 3:

Provide a critical review of the key features of school reform initiatives aimed at altering the relationship between time and learning as a means of bringing about and sustaining school improvement. You should draw

from research studies using data and your understanding and readings in human development and learning theory to answer this question. Include in your response:

- * the goals and designs of such school reform initiatives
- * the populations targeted by such reforms and the tools used to implement them
- * implementation challenges and successes
- * the outcomes of reform initiatives aimed at time and learning, and
- * lessons learned for the field.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 3

Where does the time go? We all ask ourselves this question, but teachers and school administrators are asking it more often since the inception of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Schools are forced to squeeze an expanded curriculum into just 180 six-hour days, leaving little time for teachers to help students explore, experience, and master concepts. Most schools still follow a traditional school calendar. Our society has changed, yet most schools still remain rooted in a traditional schedule. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) issued a report which began:

“Learning in America is a prisoner of time. For the past 150 years, American public schools have held time constant and let learning vary. The rule, only rarely voiced, is simple: Learn what you can in the time we make available...The boundaries of student growth are defined by schedules for bells, buses, and vacations instead of standards and student learning.”

A common assumption in American culture when it comes to time and education is “more is better.” If this assumption is correct, a longer school day or school year should result in more learning. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is implementing an initiative in many schools which explores the “more is better” assumption. Several schools are implementing an initiative called Expanding Learning Time (ELT) to expand the school day by

thirty percent. As a result of Massachusetts' implementation of this reform effort in 2005, the reform strategy of expanding learning time has received national attention, even recently a national TIME bill was proposed to Congress to invest 250 million dollars in Expanded Learning Time reforms across the nation. There is an explosion of talk about time and learning reforms, in fact expanding learning has been highlighted as a desired reform strategy by Arne Duncan, US commissioner of education in one of his first speeches to the US and in the *Race to the Top* reform. This paper explores a brief history of the time and learning reform efforts, the populations targeted by the time and learning reform, implementation challenges and successes, outcomes of reform initiatives, and lessons learned from the field

What lies behind the reform strategy?

The relationship between time and learning is not a newly explored issue. For many years, educators have examined time and learning. The research literature on the relationship of time and learning spans the course of three decades. However, the relationship is not direct and the results of studies vary depending on a number of factors. Learning takes time, but providing time does not in itself ensure that learning will take place (Carroll, 1963; Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974; Anderson, 1981; Aronson, Zimmer & Carlos, 1999; Berliner, 1990; Kidder et. al., 1975)

Early studies which examined the amount of instructional time in relation to student learning were primarily large, quantitative studies examining the question of "Does more time mean more achievement?". However, it wasn't until the early 1970s that researchers attempted to look beyond mere quantity of time by examining student engagement in relation to time. Several studies which examine the impact of extending the school year, as well as studies which explore the impact of full day vs. half-day kindergarten, help support the notion that significant allocated time in school is beneficial to young children (Worthern and Zsiray, 1993; Hough and Bryde (1996) Frazier and Morrison, 1998, Plucker, 2004). Several studies conclude that year-round

education improves education and academic achievement, improves attendance and improves attitudes toward school (Worthern and Zsiray, 1993; Hough and Bryde (1996) Frazier and Morrison, 1998, Plucker, 2004).

Special interest groups like Mass2020, a private interest group comprised of some very influential current and former politicians in Massachusetts and Center for American Progress began a steady movement which has resulted in a groundswell for expanding time. The issue is framed by professional organizations and a vast variety of special interest groups as an issue of competitiveness. The reform seems grounded in the movement of developing a skilled workforce for the 21st century and as in response, in my estimation, to respond to call for American competitiveness. Massachusetts in the few years preceding its Expanded Learning Time Initiative had a similar groundswell on math and science education and was seeking ways to grow the Science Technology Engineering and Math Pipeline. In fear of losing biotechnology dollars to other states and in an effort to strengthen the workforce, Massachusetts began aggressively pumping money into economic stimulus legislation which aimed to improve PK-16 education and “home grow” a STEM pipeline. The Expanded Learning Time Initiative was one such resulting solution in Massachusetts. It was designed to help turn around underperforming schools and response to the complaints of teachers and administrators that there wasn’t enough time to squeeze an expanded curriculum and prepare students for the high stakes testing known as MCAS, which developed under standards reform movement

The goals of time and learning reforms, like Massachusetts ELT initiative, is to improve academics, broaden opportunities, and enhance instruction. More time on target means more time for differentiated instruction and project-based learning. Differentiated instruction and project based learning presumably will reach students who are at the margins in school. The expanded learning time is also designed to broaden opportunities. Since the standards based movement, subjects which were untested (art, filmmaking, computers, physical education) were squeezed out of the curriculum. Teachers and administrators needed to focus on standards-based instruction and could not afford the time for other opportunities. Many argue that poor

children and those at the margins were more likely to lose enrichment activities in school. The poorest and worst performing schools had enrichment activities stripped. Expanded learning time, argued by some, would allow those opportunities to be available again. And, if done well, the expanded activities would reinforce the core subject area, by allowing the students to apply their learning to other areas. For example, one school implemented Fitness Math, where students use physical activity to apply math principals. The last major goal of time and learning reforms is to enhance instruction. With more time, teachers should be able to have common planning time, more professional development, and work with classroom coaches to provide additional support.

Honig (2006) outlines the goals of most newer reforms as “to ensure all students achieve high standards through systemic, deep, large-scale change..and aims to change professional practice throughout schools, districts, and states and students’ various communities”.(p.11). Time and learning reform goals eminent what Honig describes. Time and learning reforms are designed to give all students the time to achieve high standards.

Targets and Tools of time and learning reforms

Targets refer to a distinct group or groups of individuals for which a policy is intended, while tools are means or approaches a policy uses to achieve its goals. Determining the targets and tools of Expanded learning Time Reforms should be easy and direct. However, I will discuss several layers of targets. Like the targets of the Expanded Learning Time Reform, the tools used are also nested and can be viewed through different perspectives.

Social construction of target populations has a powerful influence and shapes both the policy agenda and the design of a policy (Ingraham and Schneider, 1993). Professional organizations, the US Department of Education and other special interest groups and politicians shape the time and learning issue as an issue of deficiency. There isn't enough time so American students are falling behind other countries. Ingram and Schneider describe dependents as groups weak in power with positive constructions. The Time and Learning reform policy constructs students and teachers as benevolent beneficiaries of the policy. Teachers and

students are constructed as important beneficiaries who are significant for improving the economy. While teachers and students are viewed positively, they are seen as weak in power because they do not actually make decisions to change institutional systems. This view of teachers and students as dependents is why policy makers feel the need to intervene and secure resources and provide solutions for their future. Time and learning reform is painted as a win for all Americans. More time in school will lead to better educated students and ultimately a more vibrant America.

While Time and Learning reforms identify teachers and students as benevolent dependents, the reform targets business and industry. Business and industry have great influence in the political arena. Legislatures and policy makers want to attract and retain business and revitalize and stabilize the struggling economy by providing high achieving, excellent quality workers for the workforce. Specifically examining the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative, the state is particularly interested in targeted 'clean', high paying industry and moving away from blue-collar manufacturing. Using Ingram and Schneider's framework for social constructions and political power, I classify these 'clean' research and development firms businesses as advantaged. This target population is positively constructed and strong in power because it is viewed by many as to provide important and meaningful work for Massachusetts citizens and crucial to generating revenue and stability for an evolving economy.

Ingram and Schneider (1990) provide a framework to understand policy tools and their underlying behavioral theories guiding those tools. "Policy tools refers to the aspects of policy intended to motivate the target populations to comply with or utilize policy opportunities"(Ingram and Schneider, 1993). McDonnell and Elmore (1991) describe four types of policy tools "mandates which provide rules constraining actions of agencies or target populations; inducements, that provide money to encourage certain activities; capacity, which provides dollars to enable agencies to take actions and system changing tools that alter the arrangement of agencies in the implementation system." Time and learning reform policies may arguably be an incentive tool

because it assumes the key players will not be motivated to change unless they are encouraged or influenced by money. In Massachusetts for example, schools that receive a grant to implement the initiative receive \$1,300 more per pupil to expand the school day. In a school of 500-600, those are substantial dollars. McDonnell and Elmore do state that “grants with highly specific purposes are inducements.”

However, the Time and Learning Reforms can be seen as a capacity building tool. A capacity building tool provides “information, training, education and resources to individuals, groups, or agencies to make decisions to carry out activities” (Ingram and Schneider, 1993). Ingran and Sneider (1993) point out capacity tools are often used when groups recognize the value of the policy-preferred activity but lack sufficient resources or support to carry it out with success. In the case of Massachusetts’ ELT initiative, each grantee was provided a coach from the special interest group Mass2020 to help them redesign their schedules, assist in conducting analysis, and provide support. In this way Mass ELT could be seen as a capacity tool which provides resources to schools. The schools ultimately develop their own redesign of curriculum, schedule and structure based on their knowledge and the support received from those funding the initiative.

“Bully pulpit or hortatory tools—tools that rely on sheer power of argument or persuasion—have grown in prominence since the 90s” (Honig, 2006). In some ways the Time and Learning reforms are symbolic or hortatory. In statewide and visual contexts, visual images of a clock running out of time are evoked. No one wants American education or our students to run out of time. The image of the clicking tock also evokes a sense of urgency. Americans must do something about increasing student success now! What the image doesn’t evoke is the complexity of time and learning. It may not be about how much time we have, but how effectively we use that time. A group of advantaged (politicos and special interest groups) are making decisions for a group of dependents (teachers and students) and evoking strong images of failing economy and the time running out to further push the urgency for time and learning reforms.

Implementation Challenges and Successes

The implementation process of any policy is complex. Presman and Wildvasky (1973) argue a verb like implementation must have an object like policy. Honig (2006) encourages implementation researchers and analysts to be cautious about seeking universal truths in examining the implementation process. Rather, she urges researchers to uncover how the policies, people, and places interact to produce results. "Studies in this vein uncover how individual, group, and cognitive processes contribute to the implementer's responses (Spillane et. al., 2006).

Policy effects are indirect, operating through and within the existing setting (Honig, 2006). Honig reveals implementers as significant drivers of policy. In the case of the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative, the State has offered grants to school districts who apply for funding. School districts determine which school(s) within the district will be expanded learning time schools. Each school district decides who and how the district will engage schools in the process of applying. Once ELT planning grants are made, the district has 1 year to undergo a planning process, involving key stakeholders in decisions about expanded the school day. If the state approves the district's plan, then schools will receive funding to expand the school day by 30% the following year. In this way, the implementation process involves a one year planning process. There are no prescriptions to the planning process and no prescriptions to how a school redesigns their time. I would describe school districts as semi-autonomous from the state. Ultimately, if the plan is not aligned with the state's vision, the district will not be able to expand the school day. Some schools have encountered so much resistance from parents and teacher's unions that they were unable to develop a plan for expanding the school day. An underlying frustration from parents of elementary parents in more affluent areas is that they do not want young children to be away from home for so long. And, many of these parents are stay-at-home parents who want to provide enrichment activities themselves to their children. On the other hand, schools which have been chronically underperforming, and most often who have the most children from lower socioeconomic status and limited English proficiency have more easily moved to implementing the reform by dramatically restructuring their days.

“In the communities of practice perspective, learning occurs not inside the minds of individuals, but rather in the fields of social interaction between people”(Hanks in Honig, 2006). The term community of practice refers to a group of individuals who, through the pursuit of joint enterprise, have developed shared practices and common perspectives. I see that the statewide policymaker have common thoughts and beliefs and there is an effort from outside special interest groups and consultants to share their views with schools, yet there does not seem to be communities of practice at the school level because often teachers were not engaged in the process. While the ELT reform attempts to develop a community of practice with shared meanings of what it means to be a “turn around” school and that more time will ensure more learning, not all at the school level are seeing those results.

Since policies and reforms are complex, there is often a disconnect between what is envisioned and what actually occurs. While it is envisioned that all schools who expand time will also examine their existing curricula and instructional practices, it is much more difficult to assess whether those changes are happening in each school which has expanded time. There have been some case studies of schools who have expanded learning time and recently a broad state-wide reporting Massachusetts that reading and Math scores in ELT schools are higher than matched comparison schools. In some schools, these changes have not been seen, but these may be the schools who only added time by doing more of the same and failed to implement curriculum and teacher professional development changes fully.

The fact that some schools see benefits and some do not might be explained from the cognitive view of implementation. The cognitive view of implementation hinges on whether and in what ways individual understanding of policy demands impacts to which practice is altered or reinforced (Spillane, 2004). As members of school communities interact where expanded learning time initiatives are implemented, they negotiate meaning about the nature of their work and their shared understandings. Implementation involves cognition.

But cognition is a social practice dependent on the people and places involved. The success and failures of individual schools and districts in implementing reform is contingent ofn the people, place and context.

Outcomes of Time and Learning Reform Initiatives

Politics is another pervasive force that shapes the implementation of Expanded Learning time reforms. Political perspectives unveil that actors at all levels of the system can influence policy implementation. Malen (2006) indicates actors may exercise their voice or silence others as an approach to using his/her power to achieve results. The Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative has fueled a political hotbed, which itself can be seen as an interesting outcome. With the late Senator Ted Kennedy, a co-sponsor of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), supporting the movement, it comes of not much surprise that on August 1, 2008, he introduced the Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act, an important next step for the expanded learning time movement. The TIME Act would provide federal funding to support states' efforts to expand the school day in pilot schools in each state. Citing the success of the Massachusetts ELT initiative, this nation-wide reform initiative is focused on low-performing, high-poverty schools and would provide a monetary inducement to states or local educational agencies via the U.S. Department of Education. Senator Kennedy emphasized the need to help American schools to remain competitive and to ensure that every student receives a 21st Century Education. Interestingly, Kennedy and his co-sponsors called the reform strategy a "new and exciting" reform, yet there have been movements since the work of John Carroll of 1963 to look at time as an important factor of reform.

In a nutshell, we have found that a full day of kindergarten is better than a half day, the block scheduling has some advantages, and that by spending more time on learning students can achieve higher test scores. According to the evaluation of the Massachusetts ELT initiative conducted by Abt Associates, with 300 additional hours as part of a redesigned day, pilot schools in Massachusetts have seen math scores increase by 44%, English Language Arts by 39%, and Science scores by 19% compared to matched comparison schools.

However, simply extending the day is not necessarily going to create success. The true success in expanding learning time is redesigning how that time is used. Larry Cuban(2008) has said “Money doesn’t make a difference. People do. Spending more is less important than strategically redirecting existing funds to promote staff performance”. If what Cuban says rings true in relation to time and learning reforms, then we should be more focused on redistributing existing resources. The relationship between time and learning is much more complex than merely “more is better.”

Lessons Learned from the Field

Nel Noddings (2007) in When School Reform Goes Bad outlines major changes we should think about in relation to school reform. Two important changes she asks us to consider are: recognizing explicitly that education is broader than schooling and recognize explicitly that children are different.

Recognizing explicitly that education is broader than schooling

Success in school is more than merely the quantity of time devoted to learning standards in a classroom. An education is something broader and involves both in and out of school time. In implementing longer school days, we cannot forget about the informal learning time in out of school time environment, enrichment activities, and family time that students give up. True not all children have perfect home environments, but it may be naive to think that school environment is necessarily better or safer.

Recognize explicitly that children are different

Students are different in their aptitude, interest, and motivations. When implementing time and learning reforms, be cautious about implementing precise amounts of time in precise ways. There is nothing precise about the issue of time and learning. There is nothing precise about children. And, therefore there are no

precise answers for complicated issues. We must examine the context and student needs in a given school and perhaps offer some degree of choice for how to extend time in the classroom.

Chris Gabrielli and Warren Goldstein (2008) have offered some lessons learned and challenges remaining in relation to the Expanded School Time and School Learning. They identify, and I mostly concur that in designing time and learning reforms 12 elements are essential: voluntary participation for schools, mandatory participation for students, whole-school redesign, significantly expanded time, clear academic focus, well-rounded education, data driven quality improvement, time for teacher collaboration and planning, individualization, time-up-front planning, partnerships with outside resources, and starting with individual schools and building to scale. While time prevents a detailed description of each of these key elements, I'd like to focus on voluntary participation of schools and individualization.

Voluntary Participation for School

Policymakers essentially have two choices when implementing time and learning reforms: either requiring schools to expand the school day or year or supporting schools which choose to expand the school day or year. There are some charter schools like Timility Middle School in Boston which consider expanded learning time to be a core pillar of their academic design. It is conceivable expanded learning time will also be an important component of Central Falls High School. The difference between the two is that Timility was created with a longer day while Central Falls and some other Massachusetts schools would need to convert to expanded learning time. Charter schools and experimental districts who create longer school days voluntarily and those public schools who choose (with support of their teachers, students, and parents) will undoubtedly have the strongest success. A top-down mandate or sweeping change without adequate planning time will likely lead to poor implementation of real curriculum changes and little achievement results. Chronically underperforming schools or turnaround schools which are mandated to restructure may choose expanded the school day. Again,

while longer school days could help, it is less likely to help if students, teachers and administrators are not fully engaged in the planning and implementation.

Individualization

If time is added to a school day, this could afford an opportunity to individualize education for children to match their needs and preferences. This could mean leaving plenty of time in classes for individualized questions or a more sensible pace with more guided inquiry experiences and depth of subject matter covered. Beyond the core academics, individualization means that there are electives and choice of students, time for enrichment activities and to socialize with other students. These are of course all ifs. In theory, there should be more time to individualize, but the reality is that implementation is very challenging and this reform, like so many that have come before it, are rooted in the power of thoughtful, reflective implementation which engages the targets (students, teachers, individual schools) with policy tools that give support and construct communities of practice, rather than top-down mandates.

Elmore (1996) discusses the role of school organization and incentive structures in large scale adoption of innovative practices. Elmore also discusses the need to change the core of education by focusing on teachers, students and knowledge while implementing educational change. Many changes, like the Time and Learning Reform, could be only a superficial change that ignores thinking and learning and only focuses on structure. A core change will ensure from the bottom-up, not from the top-down. The biggest lesson learned so far is to engage targets in reform implementation and to remember why you are implementing the reform to begin with-to impact learning.

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RESPONSE FROM EXAMINER A -PASS

Very comprehensive and well written.

RESPONSE FROM EXAMINER B -PASS

1. ARGUMENT

- The content of the argument is grounded in, and consistent with, appropriate research and theory.
- Connections to theory and research are made explicit throughout the argument and in conclusion.
- The links of theory and research to practice are discussed.
- Weaknesses and strengths of theory and research are clearly identified, and valid conclusions are reached. *Yes to all of the above. This was a well-researched answer, and the presentation was thorough. You have used the research and theory base to support your discussion points and your conclusions.*

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

- Where relevant, discussion of proposed research design is based on appropriate forms of analysis. *N/A*

2. ORGANIZATION

- Organization is effective and clear.

Generally yes. It would help the reader to follow your argument more easily if you made better use of sections with appropriate headings. Your general headings were useful, but following your line of reasoning would have been easier with some sign posts along the way (I had to re-read a few sections to get all the connections you were making).

3. CONVENTIONS

- Standards of writing and conventions (APA-style citations and references) are observed.

There are a lot of grammatical errors in this response. Normally, with a 4-hour time limit I look past these. However, there were several times when your exact mean was unclear due to such errors.