



## BEST PRACTICES IN INCREASING LEARNING TIME IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT HIGH SCHOOLS

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A state department of education (SDE) served by the Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) at SEDL requested information on best practices in increasing learning time in School Improvement Grant (SIG) high schools.

Discussed below are the procedure for selecting resources for this request, general limitations, and information regarding best practices in increasing learning time in schools and school districts that have been implemented in various states.

### PROCEDURE

To obtain resources for this update, SECC staff conducted searches of a number of research databases and online search engines, including Best Evidence Encyclopedia, Campbell Collaborative, EBSCO, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), and Google Scholar. They also searched various research, advocacy, and policy organizations, such as the Alliance for Excellent Education, Center for Comprehensive School Reform, Center on Education Policy, Center on Innovations in Learning, Center on School Turnaround, Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Commission of the States, National Center on Time & Learning, National Governors Association, Southern Regional Education Board, and What Works Clearinghouse.

During the search process, SECC staff used combinations of the following terms to locate resources: best practices for increased learning time in SIG secondary schools; high school schedules and increased time; modified schedules for increased time; increased teaching and learning time; increased instructional time in core academic subjects; SIG schools and increased learning time; low-performing schools and increased learning time; increased length of day, week, and/or year; increased total school hours; eliminating non-instructional time; extended learning time; expanded learning time; expanded-time schools; relationship between extended day or year and significant school improvement strategies in SIG secondary schools; transformation schools and extended time best practices; turnaround schools and extended time best practices; SIG schools and best practices in extended learning time; SIG secondary schools and increased learning time; optimizing time in middle and high schools; flex scheduling and student achievement; increased learning time for physical education, work-based learning, project-based learning, service learning, and experiential learning; and teacher collaboration, planning, and professional development within and across grades and subjects.

Staff located 26 resources and selected 15 for inclusion in this request based on the following criteria (a) publication or effective date within the past 10 years; (b) information from the resource provides guidance that is applicable for a statewide approach to increasing learning time in SIG high schools; and/or (c) content is relevant to the topic of increasing learning time in schools and school districts. The resources selected by SECC staff consist of one policy brief, nine reports, one handbook, and four archived webinars. Refer to the Resource Summaries below for descriptions of each of the 15 resources.

## GENERAL LIMITATIONS

The education field currently lacks a strong research base around recommended best practices and policies specifically in increasing or expanding learning time in secondary schools. Consequently, the resources discussed herein consist primarily of documents that address increasing learning time in K–12 schools. However, the information provided is applicable to scaling up such approaches in high schools that are participating in the SIG program.

Of the 15 resources selected for inclusion in this request, 14 were descriptive in nature (i.e., case studies, literature reviews, surveys, reports, and archived webinars) and one was a research study (Kaplan & Chan, 2011).

SECC staff provides the above comments to assist SDE staff and other stakeholders in making informed decisions with respect to the information presented. SECC does not endorse any policies, practices, programs, or guidelines featured in this request.

## OVERVIEW

In the past few years, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has focused its efforts on improving the nation’s lowest-performing schools through alignment of current federal resources, Race to the Top, ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) Waiver Flexibility, and the School Improvement Grant program (ED, 2011a, p. 5). The restructured SIG program requires rigorous interventions and substantially increases resources for the lowest-performing schools, with a focus on two outcomes—increased student achievement and increased graduation rates (ED, 2011a, p. 7). Figure 1. highlights the six elements of reform that ED has identified for the SIG program.



School Improvement Grants (ED, 2013a) are grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) that these agencies use to make competitive subgrants to local educational agencies (LEAs) in order to provide adequate resources that are targeted to substantially raise student achievement in the lowest-performing schools. “The SIG program has invested up to \$2 million per school at more than 1,300 of the country’s lowest-performing schools,” according to ED (2013b). In addition, ED (2011a) states that “of the 826 SIG Tier I/Tier II schools in Cohort 1, over 45% are high schools” (p. 9).

As part of their school turnaround efforts, LEAs may implement various interventions and practices with the goal of raising student achievement. One such practice—increasing learning time (also sometimes referred to as extended learning time)—is a key component of the SIG program and the focus of this request.

“Increased learning time” means using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects (ED, 2011b, p. 24).

Regarding whether or not increasing learning time may include before- and after-school instructional programs, ED’s guidance document states the following:

Research supports the effectiveness of well-designed programs that expand learning time by a minimum of 300 hours per school year. (See Frazier, Julie A.; Morrison, Frederick J. “The Influence of Extended-year Schooling on Growth of Achievement and Perceived Competence in Early Elementary School.” *Child Development*. Vol. 69 (2), April 1998, pp. 495–497 and research done by Mass2020.) Extending learning into before- and after-school hours can be difficult to implement effectively, but is permissible under this definition, although the Department

encourages LEAs to closely integrate and coordinate academic work between in school and out of school. To satisfy the requirements in Section I.A.2(a)(1)(viii) of the turnaround model and Section I.A.2(d)(3)(i)(A) of the transformation model for providing increased learning time, a before- or after-school instructional program must be available to all students in the school (ED, 2011b, p. 24).

The Alliance for Quality Education (2011, p. 1) recommends that a comprehensive, integrated extended learning time initiative should include the following:

- Time for students to “go deep” in core academic subjects, including time for project-based learning and hands-on activities;
- Time for students who need it to get specific, intensive remediation on subjects where they’re struggling;
- Enrichment programs in dance, music, art, and drama;
- Outside partnerships, where students can work with local agencies, universities or service-providers on a range of projects including college and career prep classes, mentoring or tutoring, and more;
- Time for teachers to work and plan together to strengthen instruction.

Additional resources that provide detailed information on increasing learning time in schools and school districts are discussed in the Resource Summaries section of this request.

## REFERENCES

- Alliance for Quality Education. (2011, January). *Alliance for Quality Education: Agenda for school improvement—Extended learning time to expand opportunities for students*. Retrieved from <http://www.aqeny.org/ny/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/EXTENDED-LEARNING-TIME.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2011a). *An overview of school turnaround*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigoverviewppt.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2011b). *Guidance on fiscal year 2010 School Improvement Grants under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance05242010.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2013a). *School Improvement Grants*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2013b). *U.S. Department of Education announces Arizona will receive \$10.4 million to continue its efforts to turn around its lowest-performing schools*. [Press Release]. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-arizona-will-receive-104-million-continue-effo>

## RESOURCE SUMMARIES

Donner, J., Morgan, E., & Stonehill, R. (2010). *Integrating expanded learning and school reform initiatives: Challenges and strategies*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from <http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/SchoolReformInitiatives.pdf>

Because of the research that suggests “well designed expanded learning programs can have a positive impact on student achievement, attendance and graduation rates, and other desirable student outcomes—but they are not often incorporated as a key element in school improvement plans” (p. 1), Learning Point Associates and the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS) launched an initiative in early 2009 to explore the “growing recognition that more and better use of time is essential for preparing youth for success...” (p. 1). The resulting policy brief includes the following recommendations for integrating expanded learning opportunities in state, district, and school reform initiatives (p. 3):

1. Promote a unified vision of expanded learning that includes core elements, appropriate outcomes, and

reasonable impact indicators.

2. Implement a broad research agenda in expanded learning and its connections to school reform.
3. Encourage strategic use of existing funds for expanded learning.
4. Improve staff quality and career opportunities.
5. Support intermediaries that promote high-quality expanded learning opportunities.
6. Create, validate, and disseminate integrated design models.

These six recommendations are detailed within the brief; however, Learning Point Associates and CBASS push for further research and evaluation studies to strengthen the case for expanded learning and its impact on student achievement.

Farbman, D. (2011). *Learning time in America: Trends to reform the American school calendar*. Boston, MA: National Center on Time & Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/docs/LearningTimeinAmerica.pdf>

The National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS) joined forces to investigate the debate and policies concerning school time. Topics addressed in the report include the impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLCs) grant program, and President Obama’s FY 2011 budget and the accompanying Senate Appropriations Committee’s proposal to grant states, districts, and schools flexibility in how they used CLC funds to expand school time. It also addressed how the “Increased Learning Time” effort took shape through the revamped Title I School Improvement Grants program.

The report shares detailed examples of the steps taken by states, such as California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Oregon regarding both the reduction of the minimum number of school days (or hours) and the expansion of learning time in schools. Charts show examples of expanded-time models and cost-effective strategies to expand school time. Also included in the report are overarching recommendations as well as recommendations for policymakers and researchers at the federal, state, and local levels.

The appendix includes state policies on instructional time for all 50 states and the District of Columbia for minimum instructional days/year, minimum instructional hours/year, and minimum hours/day. “While most states require a minimum of 180 days per year, state minimums range from 160 days per year in Colorado to 186 days (for grades K–11) in Kansas. The shortest allowable number of hours for a school day falls between 5.5 and 6.5 hours, with variation by grade level” (p. 46).

Farbman, D. (2013). *Learning time in America: Trends to reform the American school calendar*. Update. Boston, MA: National Center on Time & Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.timeandlearning.org/files/LearningTimeUpdate.pdf>

This document, an updated version of the Farbman (2011) report, focuses on some of the key actions that have taken place at the federal, state, and local levels since July 2011. It concludes with an updated version of public policy recommendations that were issued in the original report, which consider the shifting policy context and “provide policymakers a roadmap for how they can best support efforts to effectively expand learning time in schools” (p. 1).

It includes the heavy emphasis placed on schools as a result of the ESEA Flexibility Waivers granted to 34 states and the District of Columbia as of March 2013. The waiver process allowed states to request the authority to implement high-quality expanded learning time using the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) funding of which 21 states had been granted such authority.

The report also includes several tables illustrating state legislation related to school time from January 2011—December 2012, school and district innovation legislation from 2008 to the time of the report’s release, and states with the largest differentials between proficiency on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) and state assessments in grade 8 for 2009. This report also includes an updated appendix, which lists the minimum number of instructional days/hours in a school year for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and, where specified, the start dates prescribed by law.

Harvard Family Research Project. (2013). *Data sharing resources for afterschool and expanded learning programs and systems*. Cambridge, MA: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title\\_iv/b\\_comlearning/harvard-family-research-project\\_datasharingresources\\_2013.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title_iv/b_comlearning/harvard-family-research-project_datasharingresources_2013.pdf)

Although linking data sharing to increase the effectiveness of expanded learning programs and systems provides the results of why partnering is necessary and effective in improving services, and in some cases, educational outcomes for students, the resources discussed below do not specifically address best practices in increasing learning time in SIG secondary schools.

The resources are placed into four categories, which are described below. All of the reports deal with an aspect of collecting data, sharing data between schools and other public and private providers, policy and legal implications for data sharing, and the initial positive impact of current data-sharing collaborations.

Creating Cross-System Collaboration and Alignment for Data Sharing (p. 1)

1. Using Data in Multi-Agency Collaborations: Guiding Performance to Ensure Accountability and Improve Programs
2. Better Data and Decision Toolkits
3. Navigating Information Sharing Toolkit

Understanding Federal Rules and Restrictions on Data Sharing (p. 2)

1. Data Sharing: Federal Rules and Best Practices to Improve Out-of-School-Time Programs and Student Outcomes
2. Privacy Technical Assistance Center

Creating City-Level Afterschool Data Systems (p. 2)

1. Collecting and Using Information to Strengthen Citywide Out-of-School Time Systems
2. Building Management Information Systems to Coordinate Citywide Afterschool Programs: A Toolkit for Cities
3. After-School-Data: Six Tip Sheets on What Cities Need to Know
4. Hours of Opportunity, Volume 2: The Power of Data to Improve Afterschool Programs Citywide

Creating Community/Neighborhood-Level Data Systems (p. 2)

1. National Neighborhood Indicators Project Lessons on Local Data Sharing
2. Striving for Student Success: A Model of Shared Accountability

Kaplan, C., & Chan, R. (2011). *Time well spent: eight powerful practices of successful expanded-time schools*. Boston, MA: National Center on Time & Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.timeandlearning.org/files/TimeWellSpent.pdf>

This report from NCTL discusses and identifies eight practices and three keys (implementation practices) per practice of 30 high-performing schools that have added longer schools days and extended the school year (refer to Table 1 below). These schools include both charter and non-charter elementary, middle, and high schools that are located in 11 states—Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Texas (p. 79). The 30 schools offer at least an extra hour per day and at least 10 more days than surrounding schools in their school districts. The free or reduced lunch population is more than 60%, and these schools have demonstrated consistently higher proficiency rates on state standardized tests for mathematics and English language arts (p. 5). The authors stressed that extended learning time is just one ingredient in the success of the 30 high-performing schools identified in this study. “These schools are demonstrating that with more time, strong leaders and teachers, and well-designed educational programs, schools can close the achievement and opportunity gaps for poor students” (p. 5).

The researchers used interviews and site visits to document how schools allocated time and the corresponding practices that indicate that the expanded time is used productively. To identify the eight powerful practices of these 30 schools, NCTL attempted to answer the following question: “How can schools maximize the great potential of expanded time and make the most effective possible use of this important resource?”

Kaplan and Chan report that none of the eight practices is a new idea. Rather, NCTL seeks to explore the relationship

between the eight identified strategies of school improvement and expanded learning time.

The authors note that not every school places equal emphasis on all eight practices, but the highly successful schools identified in this study place emphasis on integrating the practices into a unified school design. The authors end with a list of the 24 keys to success, an appendix that provides the methodology for the study, and a summary from all information collected.

**Table 1. Eight Practices of High-Performing Expanded-Time Schools**

Optimize Time for Student Learning	Use Time to Help Students Thrive in School and Beyond	Dedicate Time to Improve Teacher Effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make every minute count</li> <li>• Prioritize time according to focused learning goals</li> <li>• Individualize learning time and instruction based on student needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use time to build a school culture of high expectations and mutual accountability</li> <li>• Use time to provide a well-rounded education</li> <li>• Use time to prepare students for college and career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use time to continuously strengthen instruction</li> <li>• Use time to relentlessly assess, analyze, and respond to student data</li> </ul>

Source: Kaplan & Chan, p. 8

Lummis, B. (2012). *Key programming strategies for expanding learning time in high-poverty secondary schools*. Boston, MA: Everyone Graduates Center for Jobs for the Future. Retrieved from [http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/sites/default/files/tool\\_5\\_elt\\_guide\\_final.pdf](http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/sites/default/files/tool_5_elt_guide_final.pdf)

This document is a report prepared by the National Center on Time & Learning that was produced by the Everybody Graduates Center for the Jobs of the Future. The report identifies expanded learning time as a way to address achievement gaps and provide students the support needed to achieve academically. Four benefits are offered for restructuring the school day to expand learning time: (a) offer students and teachers opportunities not available with a traditional schedule; (b) raise achievement by providing more time to examine subject matter and more to individually address student needs; (c) empower teachers and foster collaboration; and (d) expand enrichment opportunities. Double/longer block, adaptive technology, and advisory/seminar/intensive programming models are offered as strategies for “high-quality, high-poverty expanded learning time schools” (p. 1).

The report provides a brief definition of each programming strategy along with keys to success and challenges and pitfalls. Sample schedules and case studies for both middle school and high school implementation of each strategy are also provided along with stakeholder comments.

The author concludes that expanded time must be effectively integrated into the school day, and that programming strategies should be designed to address specific identified student needs. The programming strategies offered can be adapted to align with middle and high schools in both rural and urban settings. There is an appendix that contains resources for the following: Intervention Blocks, Double/Large Blocks, Enrichment, Internships, Apprenticeships and Co-employment, Adaptive Technology, Acceleration Academies, Advising/Seminars/Intensives, and Tutoring Blocks. This report has application and suggestions for middle and high schools.

Massachusetts 2020. (2010). *More time for learning: Promising practices and lessons learned*. Boston MA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.mass2020.org/files/file/2010%20Mass%202020%20Progress%20Report.pdf>

This report highlights progress participating K–12 schools have made with respect to the Extended Learning Time initiative developed and implemented through a partnership between the nonprofit organization Massachusetts 2020 and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. According to the report, "... participating schools are expanding the school day by at least 300 hours per year for all of their students to improve student outcomes in core academic subjects, broaden enrichment opportunities, and improve instruction by adding more planning and professional development time for teachers" (p. 3).

The first section of the report provides an overview of the initiative, describes the partnership, and provides a list of participating schools. Following this introduction, progress data are depicted in charts and graphs with corresponding narratives and captions showing how achievement gaps are closing between three of the most successful participating schools and the state in the areas of English language arts, mathematics, and science. The rest of the report focuses on five best practices common to the most successful schools, each of which is described in detail and supported with anecdotes from exemplary schools.

Successful expanded learning time schools

1. Are highly focused in their approach to adding significantly more time, concentrating on a small number of key goals
2. Are relentless in their use of data to drive continuous improvement and strengthen core instruction
3. Add core academic time that allows teachers to individualize support for students and accelerate achievement
4. Strategically add time for teachers to collaborate to strengthen instruction
5. Engage students in high-quality enrichment programs that build skills, interests, and self-confidence (p. 12).

McMurrer, J. (2012). *Increased learning time under stimulus-funded School Improvement Grants: High hopes, varied implementation*. Washington DC: Center on Education Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED533562.pdf>

This special report published by CEP focuses on two studies it conducted concerning increased learning time, a required component of the federally funded SIG program. One study involved a survey of 46 SEA officials, and the second was based on case studies examining the implementation of these grants in Maryland, Michigan, and Idaho.

A majority of the states surveyed reported that they believe increased learning time is a key element impacting student achievement; "Some state officials indicated that the importance of this strategy varied from school to school. A few said it was too early to tell whether increased learning time is making a difference" (p. 2).

A description of case study data per state is included, providing information on elementary and secondary school approaches to increased learning time. These data indicate some states and schools do not consider the implementation of increased learning time a priority, while some schools find it challenging. A variety of implemented school and district strategies include lengthening the school day, increasing block time for core subject areas, establishing flex time, and offering academic support before- and after-school hours.

Perlman, C. L., & Redding, S. (2011). *Handbook on effective implementation of School Improvement Grants*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from [http://www.centerii.org/handbook/Resources/Handbook\\_on\\_Effective\\_Implementation\\_of\\_School\\_Improvement\\_Grants.pdf](http://www.centerii.org/handbook/Resources/Handbook_on_Effective_Implementation_of_School_Improvement_Grants.pdf)

This handbook serves as an introduction to school improvement processes state and local educational agencies can use for guidance in the implementation of School Improvement Grants. Part I of this handbook discusses the purpose of the grants, the process for identifying eligible districts and schools, and the selection of the most promising interventions to improve persistently low-performing schools.

Part II covers a range of school improvement topics, providing strategies and specific "action principles" intended for the

state, district, and school levels. Each chapter is intended as a general introduction to the improvement strategies. The references direct readers to both the primary supporting literature and related resources should they choose to pursue the topic in greater depth. An appendix of additional resources is included.

As indicated by the chapter titles, the school improvement processes discussed in Part II include organizational structures, leadership and decision making, human capital management, curriculum and instruction, scheduling and learning time, and student supports. Of particular interest, Chapter 8 focuses on extended learning time for both elementary and secondary settings. This chapter opens with an introduction to research on learning time and provides a definition. It is segmented into six subtopics that describe specific strategies for different grade levels, including secondary. As such, the National High School Center provides a discussion on restructuring and extending the school day. Items of interest include addressing time structure during the school day and extending the school day and year.

Princiotta, D., & Fortune, A. (2009). *The quality imperative: A state guide to achieving the promise of extended learning opportunities*. Washington DC: Council of Chief State School Officers & National Governors Association. Retrieved from <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/0904ELOQUALITYIMPERATIVE.PDF>

This collaborative report between the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices provides guidance for states in the development and implementation of extended learning opportunities (ELO). The report also shares some of the existing research on the importance of high-quality ELOs and their impact on student achievement, engagement, behavior, and family/community connections.

Shared features of identified high-quality ELOs are also provided from a clear program mission to sufficient resources and funding. Additionally, specific actions are prescribed to states in their development of an ELO quality system (p. 9):

1. Create an ELO quality team
2. Identify funding sources for ELO quality
3. Set state ELO goals and program standards
4. Measure ELO performance
5. Provide incentives to improve ELO quality
6. Support a strong ELO workforce
7. Connect students with high-quality ELOs

SchoolsMovingUp WestEd. (2011, April 7). *Making every minute count*. [Archived Webinar]. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/view/e/4965>

Ben Lummis, vice president at the National Center on Time & Learning, and Sarah Gallagher, program associate at NCTL, discuss strategies for adding more learning time to the school schedule, using data to individualize instruction and provide tiered support for students, and allocating resources.

SchoolsMovingUp WestEd. (2011, April 28). *Effective ways to use expanded learning time*. [Archived Webinar]. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/view/e/4966>

Primary presenter Ben Lummis, vice president at NCTL, provides insight regarding effective uses of additional learning time to provide more blocks of time for academic support, interventions for struggling students, as well as providing additional supports outside of the school year and school day.

SchoolsMovingUp WestEd. (2011, May 12). *Making choices to prioritize learning time for students*. [Archived Webinar]. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/view/e/4967>

Ben Lummis and Sarah Gallagher from NCTL discuss strategies for utilizing partnerships, technology, and staff scheduling to prioritize learning time.

SchoolsMovingUp WestEd. (2011, May 26). *Using additional teacher collaboration time to improve student achievement*. [Archived Webinar]. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/view/e/4968>

NCTL staff members Ben Lummis and Sarah Gallagher share how additional time can be used to enhance teacher collaboration and professional development.

Scott, C., McMurrer, J., McIntosh, S., & Dibner, K. (2012). *Opportunities and obstacles: Implementing stimulus-funded School Improvement Grants in Maryland, Michigan, and Idaho*. Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED532799.pdf>

This report, written by the CEP, examined first year American Recovery and Reinvestment Act School Improvement Grants implementation in three different geographic locations and with different types of schools and improvement initiatives. The three states included Maryland, Michigan, and Idaho; seven school districts and 11 schools were included in the study. Data were collected from interviews conducted between September 2011 and February 2012 of state and district officials, principals, teachers, and other staff members.

Additionally, case studies were conducted on school-level implementation in four Maryland schools, four Michigan schools, and three Idaho schools. The schools included both those receiving ARRA SIG grants as well as low-achieving schools that did not receive the funding. The data collection process also included reviewing ARRA SIG applications and other state and school documents. Detailed information about the study methods can be found in an online appendix that accompanies the report. Included in the report are key findings that cut across multiple states, perspectives from state officials of each one of the three states on their state's implementation of the ARRA SIG program, and a detailed comparison of improvement methods in schools that received ARRA SIG funding with schools that were eligible for the grants but did not receive grant funding.

Accompanying the included components of the report are specific examples of both opportunities and obstacles from the states, tables, and boxes with information specific to the report topics and findings. Improvement initiatives across the three states included instructional coaches who delivered professional development, extended learning time, and a focus on improving school climate.

CEP found that most of the schools in the study had extended learning time by adding to the overall length of the day or by eliminating instructional time or by both. However, some of the schools extended learning time only for students with the greatest needs through Saturday school programs, before- and/or after-school tutoring, decreases in transition times between classes, or shifts in the master schedule to devote more instructional time, especially in English language arts and mathematics. Other schools developed flex time periods for remediation and/or enrichment depending on assessment results. Some of the schools expressed concern over the sustainability of extended learning time once the grant funding becomes nonexistent.

**Information Requests** are customized reports that are prepared to fulfill requests for information by the departments of education of the states served by the Southeast Comprehensive Center at SEDL. The requests address topics on current education issues related to the requirements and implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). For additional information, visit the SECC website at [secc.sedl.org](http://secc.sedl.org).

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