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on

*“Innovative Approaches to School
Time”*

Presentation to the Committee

by

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Abstract

If standards are the constant, then time must be the variable. When both time and standards are the constant, teachers are forced to work in a system that demands coverage and coverage is the enemy of understanding. When schools are not structured with the time necessary to teach for understanding, then students, teachers, schools and entire districts are labeled as failing when quite often they are making great progress.

When standards are the constant and time is allowed to be the variable, teachers are able to teach for understanding. Understanding leads to deep conceptual knowledge that is supported by a body of skills and facts. Students are able to apply their understanding in diverse situations and solve problems in innovative and creative ways.

As a nation, we must invest in the following uses of time as the Opportunity-to-Learn Standards that make the realization of content and performance standards possible.

As we focus on innovative uses of time in our schools, we should:

- Ensure that there is expanded learning time for young children including, but not limited, to quality pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, and extended school years.
- Create flexible time within the day for intervention, remediation and enrichment.
- Invest in full-service Community Schools that are open evenings, weekends and year-round.
- Eradicate the practice of labeling students in grades and instead allow them to learn at their own pace.
- Disconnect high school graduation from Carnegie Units.
- Invest in teacher learning time, above and separate from the time spent teaching students.

Reform initiatives have been created in silos with each effort standing alone waiting for the promise of being the thing that changes the entire system. Time has that possibility. The investment would be tremendous and the results astounding.

It is generally agreed upon that, while flawed and controversial, the No Child Left Behind Act has focused the education conversation on a school system's ability, or inability, to address two of our nation's goals for education reform—closing the achievement gap and increasing graduation rates. One recent step toward achieving those goals has been to develop and adopt common standards that define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education.

As unprecedented and important as common standards may be in our efforts to meet goals for public education, one type of standard has largely gone unaddressed. Opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards, characterized by Linda Darling Hammond as the “standards that attend to the opportunity gap as well as the achievement gap”, will be the linchpin in the next phase of reform. OTL standards have been defined over time as the essential elements in education that give all students the opportunity to learn the curriculum. Some of the essential OTL standards are: competent, qualified and caring teachers; appropriate curriculum materials; adequate technology; support services; and, access to the other resources needed to succeed in school and life.

This list of OTL standards is indisputable, yet there is one essential ingredient that must be added. That ingredient is *time*. Focusing our efforts on time holds the promise of addressing many of the factors that create the opportunity gap. Additional school time is an important step toward closing the achievement gap and raising graduation rates; but, these two goals actually fall short of what students ultimately need and deserve. We must strive for more than merely graduating students with surface knowledge and good test-taking skills. As noted by the Center for American Progress,

At the core of expanded learning time is a critical and fundamental principle that cannot be overlooked—the complete redesign of the school's educational program. Successful implementation of expanded learning initiatives occur in tandem with other reform strategies and practices that take place through the redesign process. Without conjoining expanded learning time with the redesign principle, more time risks being “more of the same” and a promising school improvement strategy becomes a band-aid.

In order to avoid “more of the same,” additional time must be implemented in tandem with *innovative uses of time*. Using existing and additional time in innovative ways has the potential to disrupt the *status quo* of our obsolete classroom, school and district norms. We can then aspire to go beyond just closing the achievement gap and increasing graduation rates. Teachers will be able to develop in their students the skills, attributes and dispositions that employers want and that our students need. Schools will graduate students who are creative, innovative, adaptable, self-motivated, and able to solve problems and work in groups. Closing the achievement gap and increasing the graduation rate without these qualities as the ultimate goal is, as John Dewey put it, “narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy”.

A purposeful and innovative rethinking of school time has many important and interconnected effects. Teachers' pedagogical strategies will become more diverse,

engaging and robust. Student needs will be better identified and addressed. Teaching will become a more attractive profession. Thus, our school systems will have an unprecedented ability to attract the best candidates into teaching and retain the most effective teachers.

The Work of Teachers: Stuck in the Industrial Era

The current challenges to innovation in the use of school time have their roots in the entrenched social and industrial practices of the past century. Prompted by the effects of industrialization on the job market from 1890 to 1920, centralization created an entire societal change in attitudes toward public education (Murphy, 1990). It was during this time that those who believed in the virtues of bureaucracy in education argued that the organization should be built on a rational division of labor (Kerchner & Mitchell, 1988). Industrial notions of organizations—hierarchies are efficient and specialization is the way to handle complex tasks—began to affect teaching as concepts about learning coincided with the growth of behavioral psychology (Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1997).

As a result, the use of the factory as a metaphor for school systems is a common one. Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) writes, “The application of scientific management to U.S. schools followed the rush of excitement about the efficiencies of Henry Ford’s assembly-line methods. Schools were expected to be the most efficient means to produce a product whose uniformity and quality could be programmed by carefully specified procedures” (p.39). Later, with the advent of the “Taylor System” of management, school systems created separate responsibilities between the managers and the workers. Most, if not all, modern school districts function as a legacy of this system. Darling-Hammond observes, “We have planning departments to design the work, managers and superintendents to coordinate it, and clerks to maintain the records of the inputs, outputs, and procedures” (p. 40).

The nature and scope of teachers’ work and their struggle to be considered professionals can be traced to their place at the bottom of the hierarchical system of public schools. This system was designed to emulate factories where the bulk of the workforce, in this case, teachers do the work but don’t control the work. In this system, teaching methods—particularly in secondary schools—focused on what Darling Hammond calls “transmission teaching” where the teacher lectures, the students take notes and the test is given to see what they remember. Shaking up entrenched time configurations has the potential of limiting the lecture method in schools and replacing it with intellectually, engaging, hands-on learning experiences coupled with powerful authentic assessments.

While significant portions of the educational reform movement in the eighties and early nineties was focused at shaking up the *status quo* of our organizational roots, over the last decade NCLB has had the opposite effect. The current mandates have had the effect of limiting rigorous and relevant teaching methods as teachers are told to teach with *fidelity* to a pacing guide written by textbook companies owned by testing companies that know nothing about teaching and students. In essence, teachers are asked to practice in a

context that defines insanity—doing what we’ve always done (or been told to do), but expecting different results.

Once we free ourselves from a factory model and the time practices handcuffed to that structure, we must rethink such unquestioned time-honored practices as:

- grouping kids in grades;
- grading as a way to communicate what has been learned;
- moving kids around based on bell schedules; and
- separating subjects divided into discrete time blocks.

Schools can no longer be expected to change and still look the same. It’s time to get away from the legacy of the factory that imprisons us, as educators, as well as the students we teach. We know that “a cage for every age” is an archaic and dysfunctional way to group students. It’s time for us to start questioning the sacred rituals of schools and school systems. We can use *time* as the catalyst to do just that.

Expanded Learning Time for Young Children: The Relationship Between the Opportunity Gap and the Achievement Gap

“The traditional school year has been called a relic of the agrarian age of past centuries, when children were needed at home in the afternoons and during the summer to work, and education was not the economic necessity it is today” (ECONorthwest, 2008). Although it could be argued that the traditional school day and year no longer serves any population, it is a particular problem for the kids who just need more time, especially those who have grown up in poverty.

Researchers continue to confirm the importance of the first years of life for children’s emotional and intellectual development. Poor children face a greater risk of impaired brain development due to their exposure to a number of risk factors associated with poverty and educationally-related health problems, like hearing loss, vision problems, and lack of dental health. Higher incidence of asthma can be confirmed by every school nurse and teacher in schools serving poor children.

When socio-economically deprived children fall behind in spoken vocabulary development during their first three years of life, they are very likely to struggle in their school work in every grade. Early childhood teachers know that the foundational skills needed for reading proficiency start with the initial literacy skills of speaking and listening. There is universal agreement that reading proficiency holds the key to future educational doorways. Scientists confirm what teachers know: kids living in poverty come to school with smaller vocabularies than kids from middle and upper class backgrounds. This “word gap” leads to the reading gap, and teachers know that the best way to address the achievement gap is to address the opportunity gap.

As evidenced by *The Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act* sponsored by Senators Edward Kennedy, Jeff Bingaman and Bernie Sanders in 2008 (Appendix A),

there is growing political support for the necessity of more time in school. “The 19th-century school calendar of 180 days per year and 6.5 hours a day does not meet the educational demands of our 21st-century economy. As we expect more from our students and teachers, we must provide them with the time they need to achieve – for students to increase learning, and for teachers to plan and collaborate to improve teaching.” Wisely, the sponsors of the TIME Act promoted the importance of adding time not only to “catch up” in the basics, but also to ensure a well-rounded educational program that includes fine arts and physical education for students as well as essential time for teachers to plan and collaborate.

In every state, there are numerous examples of extending time for some students—the School Improvement Zone in Dade County and the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative, to name a few. Research has shown that poor and minority children tend to begin school at an academic deficit compared to their higher-income and White peers. Research also documents that students who start school behind academically are likely to stay behind. The reality is that too many disadvantaged children lack high-quality educational experiences and access to engaging, enriching programs during traditional school time, after-school hours and summer months, and consequently never catch up.

Over the past few years, New Mexico, like other states, has worked to provide more time for young children. Early intervention during the significant early childhood years is imperative to a student’s success particularly for those children who live in poverty. For example:

Full-Day Kindergarten

In 2000, legislation was passed to phase-in full-day kindergarten. During the program’s phase-in (2000 to 2005), priority was given to school districts with schools having the highest proportion of students-at-risk for educational failure. According to the NM case study written by Anthony Raden for the Columbia Institute for Child and Family Policy, “Full-day kindergarten students consistently outperform half-day kindergarten students,” he cites a report from a 1993 evaluation that compared students who attended full-day classes at an Albuquerque elementary school to those who received traditional half-day classes. “By the end of the school year, full day kindergartners gained an average of 17 months on a measure of academic achievement, compared to only 5.4 months for half-day students. The full-day students also scored significantly higher than their half-day peers on a school readiness test” (p.21). Raden goes on to note that the New Mexico findings were consistent with a body of research from other states.

Staffing Implications

The class size for New Mexico’s kindergartens is 20:1 with an Educational Assistant assigned to class when there are 15 students or more. According to a study on ERIC (www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Recent_Research_All), “In the fall of 1998, of the 4 million children attending kindergarten in the United States, 55% were in all-day programs and 45% were in part-day programs.” Using the reasonable pupil teacher ratio

from NM and numbers in the ERIC study implies that the nation would need to hire a fourth again the number of Kindergarten teachers.

Pre-Kindergarten

Begun to serve children in communities most in need, New Mexico's pilot pre-kindergarten programs should continue to be funded with the eventual goal of making pre-k available to all of the state's four-year-olds. A study done by The National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University found that, "Receptive vocabulary, early literacy and early math skills were assessed in a sample of 886 children from across New Mexico. We found that the New Mexico Pre-K initiative has statistically significant and meaningful impacts on children's early language, literacy and mathematical development" (p. 30).

Staffing Implications

- The current cohort 4-year-old group used by the CYFD and other state agencies is 28,000.
- The number fluctuates between 24,000 and 29,000 annually.
- Currently, here is a breakdown of the 28,000:
 - 5,500 are enrolled in federally-funded Head Start
 - 3,500 are enrolled in a 5-STAR level childcare program
 - 5,000 are enrolled in Pre-K
 - 14,000 in a lower star child care program/home provider child care, or no program of any kind
- The current goal/standard (not followed by all) is for 12 students/Pre-K class. Based on that projection:
 - 28,000 students = 2,333 teachers
 - 14,000 students (those currently not in any program) = 1,166 teachers
 - 14,000 students (those in head start and other child care) = 1,166 teachers
- One of the current topics of discussion is the supplanting of federal dollars for childcare/early education. Thus, there is a large group who don't support Pre-K for those students currently enrolled in Head Start. The big catch phrase in my meetings right now is a "menu of options" for parents to select child care and education.

Kindergarten-Plus

Initially promoted by former AFT President Sandra Feldman, Kindergarten Plus is a program that gives low-income children a jump-start on school success by providing

added instructional days in the summers before and after the regular kindergarten year. New Mexico was the first state to implement Kindergarten-Plus. The first evaluation demonstrated that the extra school time the program provides helps children flourish both socially and academically and also increases parental involvement in their children's education.

The New Mexico Kindergarten-Plus program began in 2003 as a three-year pilot program administered in four school districts: Albuquerque, Gadsden, Gallup-McKinley and Las Cruces. During the 2003-04 school year, 260 students participated across all four districts and in 11 high poverty schools. The New Mexico Office of Education Accountability's report found that the Kindergarten-Plus programs were implemented in a variety of ways, from scheduling the extra days differently to filling classrooms with an assortment of Kindergarten-Plus students and later transfers or registrations. Despite wide variances in programs and results, a number of positive outcomes were observed, including:

- Positive assessment trends particularly in letter-naming and word-sound fluency;
- Decreases in students classified with delayed skills in the pre-kindergarten project in Gadsden School District;
- Strengthened social maturity and greater parental involvement.

K-3 Plus

K-3 Plus expanded the successful Kindergarten Plus program to include children from Kindergarten through Grade 3. In 2007, House Bill 198 established K-3 Plus to allow New Mexico public schools and districts to develop a six-year pilot project that extends the school year for kindergarten through third grade by 25 instructional days beginning before school starts. Through targeted resources and providing extra time for those students who need it most, K-3 Plus is helping to close the opportunity gap by providing the extra time some students need to be successfully reading by third grade.

An evaluation by the Early Intervention Research Institute, Utah State University in the fall of 2009 found,

Stakeholder perceptions of the program were largely obtained from focus groups held with K-3 Plus participating families and head teachers in the five in-depth school districts. Perceptions of the program were overwhelmingly positive. Many participants reported that students would have spent the time in, at best, childcare or summer camps and at worst on the streets and in potentially dangerous environments. Families and teachers reported that students had fun, and improved their academic and social skills. With fewer students and without the presence of the oldest students in the school, kindergartners were able to get to know their teacher and school environment better. Many parents suggested that the program be extended more days. Some families suggested that it be extended to serve older students and did not understand why the cutoff for eligibility was third grade. Teachers perceived the program as an opportunity to provide differentiated instruction in smaller classrooms, to get kindergartners ready for school, to help

students with self-esteem and accelerate learning. Teachers and parents liked the variety offered during the K-3 Plus time—including music, theater, social studies and science, in addition to the usual literacy and math curriculum. The focus group results suggest that once teachers and parents participate in K-3 Plus they are likely to continue to participate. (p.3)

Staffing Implications

Assuming there are no changes in maximum class loads, the implications are limited to compensation for those who teach and work in the program.

Time Within the Day: The Need for Intervention

According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative website (www.corestandards.org), “The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America’s children for success in college and work”. But America’s children are far from standardized and the intellectual, emotional, and physical development of children is influenced by numerous factors that fall far outside the influence of schools. If standards are the constant, then time must be the variable.

Parents are fond of comparing stories about their children's development: “My first child didn’t walk until he was one-and-a-half but my second kid walked by 9 months.” These variations in human growth and development are commonly known and accepted until, of course, children enter school. Then, everyone is expected to develop in every area at exactly the same pace. Currently, the effects of NCLB has given this practice—at odds with everything that both science and our experiences have told us about growth and learning—even more credence as it demands proficiency for all children in every grade at exactly the same moment in time. To reinforce this faulty notion, publishers have created teacher- and student-proof pacing guides.

Unfortunately, too many schools have responded to this challenge by narrowing the curriculum in order to place greater emphasis on core subjects such as reading and math. Cognitive researchers, however, caution that this does greater harm than good by removing students from learning experiences that can actually help them gain broader knowledge and context to better understand what they are learning. Intervention programs, when staffed properly, can make school for these students about catching up and accelerating without narrowing the curriculum and avoiding ill-conceived practices, like taking away recess time or elective classes for those who are behind.

When Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it changed the law about identifying children with specific learning disabilities. IDEA 2004 requires careful attention to how special education evaluations are conducted. The law places emphasis on linking student assessment to student instruction through the use of Response to Intervention (RTI).

Response to Intervention integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities.

As a result, the general education teachers, who already carry a full teaching load and have the responsibility to teach every child in their class to the NM State Standards, must now do the following for any child in the class who is behind and requires Tier 2

Intervention (while teaching a full class of students):

- Supplement with re-teaching or intervention.
- Schedule a supplement period.
- Reduce the size of the group down to three students or less.

If the student is still not exhibiting appropriate learning gains, then the teacher must:

- Replace current program with an intervention program.
- Schedule two intervention sessions daily (no less than 90 minutes total).

In theory, this policy is excellent, but in practice it is impossible. Unfortunately, intervention has become another unfunded mandate. In practice, an elementary teacher cannot adequately serve his/her entire class and provide both additional small group and individual intervention as mandated by law. And, unfortunately, in order to meet the mandate in secondary schools, many students are required to double up their Language Arts and Math periods by dropping their electives that are often the classes in which they experience great success.

Additional trained teachers hired as Intervention, Reading and Math Specialists must be provided to schools to address student needs and Federal mandates. Like K-3 Plus, Intervention Specialists would enable schools to address the Achievement Gap by addressing the Opportunity Gap.

There are many textbook companies that are selling schools intervention programs purported to "fix" the teacher and the students. Often prescriptive and implemented by non-licensed school personnel, these programs negate what research tells us about the value of interventions when done properly. The most important component of an effective reading program is that students are able read and hear read aloud a rich base of engaging, high quality texts in a variety of fiction and nonfiction genres. One such intervention is Reading Recovery.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) [<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>] reports, "*Reading Recovery* is a short-term tutoring intervention intended to serve the lowest-achieving (bottom 20%) first-grade students. The goals of *Reading Recovery* are to promote literacy skills, reduce the number of first-grade students who are struggling to read, and prevent long-term reading difficulties. *Reading Recovery* supplements classroom teaching with one-to-one tutoring sessions, generally conducted as pull-out sessions during the school

day. Tutoring, which is conducted by trained *Reading Recovery* teachers, takes place daily for 30 minutes over 12–20 weeks”.

Based on these five studies, the WWC considers the extent of evidence for *Reading Recovery* to be medium to large for alphabets, small for fluency and comprehension, and medium to large for general reading achievement. The Reading Recovery website (<http://www.readingrecovery.org>) reports,

- Since 1984 when Reading Recovery began in the United States, approximately 75% of students who complete the full 12- to 20-week intervention can meet grade-level expectations in reading and writing. Follow-up studies indicate that most Reading Recovery students also do well on standardized tests and maintain their gains in later years.
- The few students who are still having difficulty after a complete intervention are commended for further evaluation. Recommendations may be made for future support (e.g., classroom support, Title I, LD referral). This category represents a positive, supportive action on behalf of the child and the school. Diagnostic information from Reading Recovery is available to inform decisions about future actions.

Staffing Implications

Staffing implications depend entirely on how many students are identified as needing interventions and how many students can be appropriately served in individual time segments. Ideally, each elementary school should have one licensed teacher at each grade level (K-5) whose primary assignment would be to provide intervention. This would equate to about 2,760 additional teachers (460 elementary schools times six grade levels) statewide. If you provided the same amount of support to grades 6 through 12 based on enrollment figures, you could safely say that this would equate to over 5,000 intervention teachers statewide for all grade levels.

Fair Is Not Equal: Wrap-Around Services and Rethinking School Time

At best, it is unproductive to hold schools accountable for closing the achievement gap without the social supports needed to address community needs. Poor kids are more likely to attend poorly-maintained and poorly-equipped schools. Generations ago, when poor kids went to school, their world was more than likely expanded. School may have been the only place with running water, telephones and books. Now, the experience that kids living in poverty have at school is pretty much the same as what they experience at home, if not worse—a lack of a healthy learning environment, a lack of modern technology, overcrowded conditions and peeling paint. These conditions are more prevalent in our urban school systems, where kids have no choice but to cope with the substandard physical and educational condition of their schools. It is possible to hold schools accountable for students’ learning as long as there is reciprocal accountability for

supportive social policies for families and kids in poverty and attention to issues such as health care.

We must insist that schools serving the kids with the least resources get the most resources, including, but not limited to: lower pupil teacher ratios; longer school days and year; more social services on site; increased staffing; the best physical plants; and the most intellectually rigorous and culturally relevant curriculum and teaching methodologies. We must embrace the reality that, in order to be fair to all students, resources can not be equal.

In 1994, the Report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning “*Prisoners of Time*” documented that community concern about latch-key children in the Murfreesboro Schools in Tennessee. It found that the concern “was strong enough to justify extending the school year” and that “within two years, public demand forced the extension of the concept to every elementary school in the city.” The demand is far greater today.

Growing demand and increased support for students has created a renewed focus on wrap-around services in community schools. One well-known example of success in this area is the Harlem Children’s Zone providing health and learning opportunities for both students and parents. The mission of Communities in Schools is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

The Coalition for Community Schools (www.communityschools.org) defines a community school as “a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone—all day, every day, evenings and weekends.”

Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities.

The American Federation of Teachers, in a motion (appendix B) passed at the 2010 convention describes services that could and should be available at community schools as they expand their hours beyond the school day. They include, but are not limited to:

- academic services, such as tutoring, community-based learning and other enrichment activities;
- medical services, such as primary, vision, dental, wellness and nutritional services;
- after-school recreational activities;
- mental health services, such as counseling and psychiatry;
- curricular tie-ins with local community employers and needs;
- jobs and internships;

- institutions of higher education, community colleges, English language skills and job development programs; and
- a variety of social services.

In AFT President Randi Weingarten’s Convention speech she underscored the need for community school partnership as we expand school time to include the services needed.

Now, just as teachers can’t educate a generation of students alone, we can’t create a new, better system of public education alone. But if we don’t lead this charge, who will? And if not now, then when? Here’s our vision: Our vision is that every neighborhood school should be an excellent school that all families know they can count on, every year, for all of their children. Our vision is to build on what works, and replicate it for all kids, in all schools, in all communities. Our vision is of schools where good teachers can work together to meet each child’s individual needs, where students develop their unique talents through a well-rounded curriculum, where all children have the support they need to reach their full potential. Our vision is for teachers to get the necessary support to constantly improve, in an environment in which students have what they need to succeed.

Implications for Staffing

Community schools require a full-time coordinator or director who understands both educational systems and human service systems, with knowledge that may come from combinations of [those systems]. (Dryfoos and Maguire) as well as increased support within the school, such as guidance counselors, social workers, nurses and community liaisons.

Secondary School-Rethinking Time

“The American high school is obsolete. It can no longer fulfill the expectations we legitimately place on it. It offers an inadequate solution to the problem of how best to motivate and educate American adolescents,” (Botstein, 1997, p.79).

There have been numerous efforts to shake up the structure of the traditional comprehensive high school, yet it remains largely impermeable to change. Students still learn in discrete blocks of time, subjects are still separated, transmission teaching is still dominant and efforts to make learning relevant and rigorous are hindered by outdated rules. At the high school level, the factory model school designed to batch process large numbers of students seems to be a permanent fixture in our educational landscape.

This secondary school structure significantly underestimates the sophistication of today’s students. Because of this fatal flaw, our worldly and demanding teens vote with their feet. Unlike the past mission of high school in which we purposefully sorted the students into college-bound and pushed out the students who we considered job-bound, our mission is

now to graduate every student. Yet, the time structures are still set up so that compliant, self-motivated and family support students find success, but intellectually curious active and often noncompliant students rarely find engagement.

Readjusting hour-long class period into longer blocks of time has been a step in the right direction. Almost two decades ago, the Report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning report “*Prisoners of Time*” recommended block schedules as a way to change what they referred to as the “design flaw” of high schools:

Fixing the design flaw also makes possible radical change in the teaching and learning process. New uses of time should ensure that schools rely much less on the 51-minute period, after which teachers and students drop everything to rush off to the next class. Block scheduling—the use of two or more periods for extended exploration of complex topics or for science laboratories—should become more common. Providing a more flexible school day could also permit American schools to follow international practice—between classes, students remain in the room and teachers come to them.

A more flexible time schedule is likely to encourage greater use of team teaching, in which groups of teachers, often from different disciplines, work together with students. Greater flexibility in the schedule will also make it easier for schools to take advantage of instructional resources in the community—workplaces, libraries, churches, and community youth groups—and to work effectively with emerging technologies.

However, as noted by ECONorthwest, “The relationship between time and learning is not straightforward. Research has demonstrated that simply adding more time to the school schedule does not translate directly to higher academic achievement. The effect of additional time depends upon how that time is used”, (p. 3), and nowhere in schooling is this more true than in high schools.

A first and essential step must be to decouple high schools from the Carnegie Units that bind them. The Carnegie Unit is a time-based system for measuring educational attainment in class or contact time with an instructor over the course of a year. It is equated to the successful completion of the units needed to graduate. In this system, seat time is equated with learning—a faulty notion at best.

The ASCD High School Reform Proposal (www.ascd.org) calls for the eradication of the Carnegie unit. They recommend,

[F]lexible use of time and structure because many schools are hindered by inflexible graduation, time and attendance requirements, such as the 100-year-old Carnegie unit, that do not reflect contemporary knowledge of best practices. Where the Carnegie unit tries to force student learning to fit outdated instructional schedules, we must instead organize learning according to each student’s needs in mastering an academic subject.

This may mean that some students complete high school in fewer or more than the traditional four years. What counts is not the time spent in the school building, but the learning that the student masters. We must give schools the opportunity to explore the best structures and environments to promote student learning— including connecting students to beneficial learning opportunities not only within the school, but also through internships, online instruction, and independent study.

Botstein goes a bit further writing, “We need to change our basic expectations entirely. The first step is to reinvent grades six through ten. Schooling during these years can be more effective and efficient so that the basic education which is now poorly delivered over a longer time span is accomplished at least two years earlier. The second step is to offer fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds educational alternatives appropriate to their maturity (p. 96). His observations are supported by the ASCD High School Reform Proposal that calls for “personalized learning to ensure that students assume ownership for connecting their learning with future goals.” The proposal goes on to say that personalized learning time “enables students to work with educational mentors and career coaches within the school building not only to see greater relevance in their schoolwork, but also to grow increasingly engaged in school”, things that our current time structures disallow.

Personalized learning is not just about how time is structured, but also about how the time spent teaching and learning is modernized. Center for American Progress notes that, “The modern conceptualization of time and learning is captured by what is known as the Academic Learning Time, or ALT, model. Developed out of research conducted by David Berliner and Charles Fisher of Arizona State University, this model goes beyond the basic construct of time in an academic setting to address how time should be used in such a setting. In other words, academic learning time considers the quantity and quality of learning time, the level of student engagement, and measures of success or outcomes,”(p.6) Academic learning time, then, is defined as the amount of time the learner spends actively engaged in worthwhile tasks at a high level of success.

The concept that our schools must reform to engage learners in more rigorous and relevant ways is not new, but it has yet to be realized. Fifteen years ago, Adam Urbanski, President of the Rochester Teachers Association, wrote his vision for the future in an article entitled Learner-Centered Schools. Timeless and worth reviewing, the entire article is included here as Appendix C. Urbanski’s vision clearly articulates what our teenagers need.

Ten years hence, what is learned is valued more than what is taught, and effective learning is viewed as inseparable from effective teaching. Learning is personalized and students learn “how to use their minds well” (Meier, 1992).

Learning by doing is now the norm, not the exception. Students are actively engaged, not passively subjected. Students talk more than teachers, and they “do stuff.” Learning itself is intellectually stimulating, real-to-life, and no longer de-contextualized. Students learn in un-graded and cooperative groups. Children of different ages and different abilities learn together, from each other,

and at their own pace. Students with special needs are no longer segregated; they learn alongside “regular education” students.

Moreover, learning is no longer restricted to the classroom. Students are involved in school governance, community service, youth apprenticeships and internships, peer and cross-age tutoring, research, and independent study. Textbooks are relegated to the back of the room—along with encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other secondary sources of information. Students read literature, use original sources, conduct interviews, and access information through computer networks, terminals, and satellites. Communities—and beyond—have become virtual classrooms, and classrooms have become more viable communities. Fieldwork, as an extension of the classroom, replaces the field trip that was merely an excursion from the classroom.

Students learn “habits of mind” (Meier, 1992). They learn how to think, and not what to think. They construct their own meaning by learning to reflect, to raise essential questions, to see connections, to discover patterns, to solve problems, to make good decisions, to understand and value diversity, to work cooperatively with others, to take risks, and to manage change. The emphasis is not on rote memorization but rather on critical and creative thinking. Students learn how to learn, and how to produce knowledge—not just reproduce it.

Knowledge is no longer defined as just having information but rather as having the skills and ability to access information and to apply it usefully. Learning occurs the way the brain works and is a more accurate reflection of the way children will live and function as adults. And the curriculum, reflecting multiculturalism, is “inclusive and emancipated” (Goodwin, 1993). There is respect for, and accommodation of, the different learning styles and types of intelligence that students have. The question no longer is “How smart are they?” but rather “How are they smart?”

Assessments of student learning are no longer based on student guesswork. The paper-and-pencil-only multiple choice tests have been replaced by more authentic, diversified, and performance-based systems of assessment that offer many options for demonstrating knowledge and skills and that in themselves promote and extend learning: exhibitions, projects, demonstrations, portfolios, simulations, products, tasks, and application of knowledge. The new assessments are done over time, are received through multiple sources, and are embedded in teaching and learning. They determine not only what students know but also what they are able to do. Through “standards without standardization” (Wiggins, 1991), students are assessed according to the progress they make, not by comparison with others.

Students believe that their success hinges largely on their own effort, not just on innate ability, circumstances, or time served. They know that employers will see not only their diplomas but also samples of their work in school—as will college admissions personnel. Students have more reasons and better incentives to try their best, and they therefore assume greater responsibility for their own learning. Thus schools are no longer places “where the relatively young come to watch the relatively old do work” (Schlechty, 1990).

All students are expected to meet quality standards and to be well prepared to think for a living. Therefore, achievement, not the amount of time served, determines promotion to the next level or graduation. Time is the variable and quality the constant so that all students can progress at their own pace. And all children now have access to the kind of challenging and rich curriculum that used to be reserved for the few—just 10 years ago.

Students who do not experience schooling as relevant and who are not engaged are at a much higher risk of dropping out. In schools where time structures have been modernized along with what students and teachers do during that time, students not only attend school more, but are also likely to get more out of their time in school.

In *‘Restoring Value’ to the High School Diploma: The Rhetoric and Practice of Higher Standards* authors Jeannie Oakes and W. Norton Grubb conclude from their research “that too often teachers often sacrifice depth to breath by choosing to forgo deeper exploration of certain topics in order to ‘cover’ all topics in high-stakes exams” (p. 14). Coverage is the enemy of understanding. Rigor too often uses a narrow definition that neglects higher-order-thinking skills, applications of learning in unfamiliar settings, and academic depth in favor of breadth. They recommend that we must replace the surface definition of rigor as the coverage of difficult subjects and a presumed hierarchy of competencies and replace it with:

- Rigor as Levels of Sophistication
- Rigor as Application and Transfer
- Rigor as Intellectual Breadth

They conclude, “The push to enhance rigor and standards behind the high school diploma is seriously flawed. Moreover, any gains come at the expense of other goals for high school reform, including equity; curricular relevance; and student interest. A more promising approach to reshaping the high school involves pathways, structured around a coherent theme, either broadly occupational or non-occupational. Focusing on a single theme nurtures multiple concepts of rigor. Moreover, the approach distributes responsibility for standards throughout the educational community, and it provides students with the benefits of curricular choice and several routes to graduation,” (p. 30).

Just as addressing innovative uses of time can bring cohesion to the implementation of the various Opportunity to Learn Standards, Project-Based Learning has that same potential to pull together the imperatives to:

- Make the high school experience relevant and changing our basic expectations of high schools;
- Shake up the structure of the traditional comprehensive high school;
- Make block scheduling successful;
- Decouple high schools from the Carnegie Units;
- Personalize learning time making it learner-centered; and,
- Create rigor beyond coverage.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional model that organizes learning around

projects. Teachers design projects, preferably in interdisciplinary teams, that are complex, based on challenging questions or problems, include authentic content and authentic assessments. Teacher facilitation takes the place of an over reliance on lectures and projects are planned around explicit educational goals.

In Project-Based Learning, students are given their due credit for having innate curiosity and age appropriate sophistication and are often involved in the design of the projects. PBL gives students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time as they create realistic products or presentations. As documented by Thomas (2000), “Other defining features found in the literature include, cooperative learning, reflection, and incorporation of adult skills”. In these classrooms:

- PBL projects are central, not peripheral to the curriculum.
- PBL projects are focused on questions or problems that "drive" students to encounter (and struggle with) the central concepts and principles of a discipline.
- Projects involve students in a constructive investigation.
- Projects are student-driven to some significant degree.
- Projects are realistic, and have real-world applications.

So, if secondary schools are organized into longer cross-disciplinary blocks and students are engaged in complex Project-Based Learning activities, and learning is not longer measured in Carnegie Units, then how might we structure time in High School?

High school hours should be flexed so that student may attend early start and end times, later start and end time or evening school. Today’s adolescents have diverse responsibilities and varied personal preferences. By flexing school schedules we create schools accessible and convenient for students rather than adults.

Implications for Staffing

The staffing for high schools must be as flexible as the diverse schedules. Teams of teachers who work together can choose common hours that correspond to the enrollment of the students. Support staff must be allocated to all schedules and extra curricular activities, such as clubs and sports, essential in high school life, can be scheduled so that students from multiple schedules can participate together. The result of multiple start and end times in high school would be the creation of smaller learning communities, a preferable and proven high school structure that has been difficult to bring to scale.

As noted in *The Flat World and Education* (Darling Hammond, 2010, p. 239):

The kinds of changes needed are not a mystery. A number of students have found that, all else being equal, schools have higher levels of achievement when they create smaller, more personalized units in which teachers plan and work together around shared groups of students and common curriculum. In addition to many case studies of successful schools, research on 820 high schools in the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) found that schools that had restructured to personalize

education and develop collaborative learning structures produced significantly higher achievement gains that were also more equitably distributed. The schools' practices included:

- Creating small units within schools
- Keeping students together over multiple years
- Forming teaching teams that share students and plan together
- Ensuring common planning time for teachers
- Involving staff in school-wide problem solving
- Involving parents in their children's education
- Fostering cooperative learning

In addition to improved and flexible uses of time within the school, there is the possibility of including learning opportunities that extend beyond the school. Service learning, internships and other forms of community involvement along with dual enrollment in community colleges or universities are essential elements of a modern high school experience.

“The implications for staffing patterns, resource allocations, and the uses of teachers' and students' time are even more distinctive for schools that engage students in extended internships outside the school, as the Met and its network of schools do; for schools that are engaging students in a range of college courses while they are in high school; and for schools that are embracing technology-based approaches to project work as the New Tech network of school does” (Darling Hammond 2010, p. 274).

The final consequence to innovative uses of time in high school is to base graduation on competence rather than credits. Basing graduation exhibitions of understanding and competence means that students would have the option to graduate when they are ready rather than the standard four years. Competence in this case must be based on assessed student understanding and not on the current trend to base competence on exit exams. Based on their research, Oakes and Grubb (2007, p.21) sum up the issues with exams, [A] closer look at exit exams indicates the following: they reinforce conventional academic curriculum; they do little to enhance standards and may even undermine them; they distort curriculum and instruction; they lead to higher and more inequitable dropout rates; and, they impose substantial costs—especially on districts and schools that can least afford it—without considering alternatives.”

Projects and portfolios provide a more authentic mechanism for assessing the competence and understanding of students and provide the added benefit of providing a diagnostic tool for education to determine when intervention and remediation are needed. Authentic assessment demands cross-curricular application of knowledge that is more applicable to a student's future success than discrete content testing.

According to a 2007 study,

Test-oriented conceptions of rigor and content rigor, the only conceptions promoted by the standards movement, lead back to the conventional academic curriculum

with all its deficiencies. Another challenge, then, is to redefine rigor, to shift to the other conceptions mentioned earlier: rigor involving higher levels of sophistication, shifting toward such higher-order skills as creativity and innovation (mentioned so often by Tough Choices or Tough Times); rigor as application and transfer, crucial to employment as well as the demands of civic and community participation; and rigor as breadth of competencies or “intelligences,” attentive to the many capacities necessary for adult roles and to the ideal of a well-rounded individual, able and eager to participate in the many facets of adult life. All of these can be incorporated into a curriculum; all of them can be assessed, sometimes through projects, often through demonstrations or portfolios. They cannot yet be assessed with conventional multiple-choice tests, primarily because nearly a century of work has been devoted to assessing conventional academic requirements, eclipsing any interest in developing alternative assessments for other kinds of goals. Yet another challenge of creating enduring pathways, then, will be to develop assessments aligned with new alternative conceptions of rigor (Oakes and Grubb, 2007, p.28).

Time—Quality, Not Just Quantity

In the report *On the Clock: Rethinking the Way Schools Use Time*, Education Sector notes,

The logic of time reform is simple—more time in school should result in more learning and better student performance. But, this seemingly straightforward calculation is more complex than it appears. Research reveals a complicated relationship between time and learning and suggests that improving the quality of instructional time is at least as important as increasing the quantity of time in school. It also suggest that the addition of high-quality teaching time is of particular benefit to certain groups of students such as low-income student and other who have little opportunity for learning outside of schools (p.1).

That study, along with numerous others, indicates that the quality, not just the quantity of time in school matters. In order to address both, we must address the need for added teacher time. It is well-documented that teachers need time to learn and plan in collaborative groups and that this time, more than almost any other factor, leads to excellent teaching and a sustainable fulfilling career.

As documented by Linda Darling-Hammond over many years of research, expert teachers are the most fundamental resource for improving education, and many countries that are ranked as most effective in education have learned that lesson. “The highest-achieving countries--Finland, Sweden, Ireland, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Canada--have been pouring resources into teacher training and support. These countries routinely prepare their teachers more extensively, pay them well in relation to competing occupations and give them lots of time for professional learning;” (*How They Do It Abroad*, Time Magazine, Feb. 14, 2008).

The teaching force in this country includes some of the best-educated people in our society. We are problem solvers, critical thinkers, and life-long learners. Yet, the systems in which we work rarely support our professional and intellectual needs as they relate to doing our jobs well. We know the “basics” of tomorrow are skills considered to be of a higher level today. These skills include critical thinking, problem solving, finding information from various sources, synthesis and application as well as creativity. As teachers, we know how to teach our students with this end in mind and we want to experience professional development that allows us to learn in the same way. We consider the most valuable professional development to be time with our colleagues.

With increased collegiality, teachers have broken the isolation that historically characterized their professional existence. Through teacher exchange opportunities, they spend time teaching in other schools, other levels, and other settings. They engage in continuous conversations with each other, across levels and across discipline. They teach in teams, hold conferences about individual students, observe each other teach, and participate in developing and assessing each other’s work. They have the time to collaborate, to learn from each other, and to plan—together not just as an afterthought, on weekends, or at the end of a long day’s work but built into the professional day. To make that possible, teachers and other staff have ample time without student contact. They view their professional development and appraisal as inseparable from the actual work that they do (Urbanski, 1995).

Most U.S. teachers have no time to work with colleagues during the school day. They plan by themselves and get a few hit-and-run workshops after school, with little opportunity to share knowledge or improve their practice (Time Magazine, 2008). Moving the nation’s teaching force toward hands-on, student-centered, relevant and rigorous pedagogy involves helping teachers develop a new conception of both teaching and learning.

This requires time for a significantly different type of professional development than the usual one-shot workshops that are force-fitted around the edges of the traditional school calendar and school day. The numerous efforts supported by a plethora of research to create professional learning communities where teachers work collectively to improve their instruction makes it clear that schools need time devoted exclusively to teachers’ continuing learning. Through such activities as observing one another’s classes, examining and discussing student work collaboratively, planning lessons and projects collectively and developing their own conceptions of the standards, teachers will be supported to accomplish the goals our nation has established for our students.

If, like other countries, we make this investment in the profession of teaching, we will attract the best and brightest, we will retain the most expert teacher and we will model for our students that the teaching profession is a viable and desirable choice for their future.

Summary

If standards are the constant, then time must be the variable. When both time and standards are the constant, teachers are forced to work in a system that demands coverage and coverage is the enemy of understanding. When schools are not structured with the time necessary to teach for understanding, then students, teachers, schools and entire districts are labeled as failing when quite often they are making great progress.

When standards are the constant and time is allowed to be the variable, teachers are able to teach for understanding. Understanding leads to deep conceptual knowledge that is supported by a body of skills and facts. Students are able to apply their understanding in diverse situations and solve problems in innovative and creative ways. Creating schools where time is the variable is the path toward the vision of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce:

The best employers the world over will be looking for the most competent, most creative, and most innovative people on the face of the earth and will be willing to pay them top dollar for their services . . . Beyond [strong skills in English, mathematics, technology, and science], candidates will have to be comfortable with ideas and abstractions, good at both analysis and synthesis, creative and innovative, self-disciplined and well-organized, able to learn very quickly and work well as a member of a team and have the flexibility to adapt quickly to frequent changes in the labor market as the shifts in the economy become ever faster and more dramatic.

As a nation, we must invest in the following uses of time as the Opportunity-to-Learn Standards that make the realization of content and performance standards possible.

As we focus on innovative uses of time in our schools, we should:

- Ensure that there is expanded learning time for young children including, but not limited, to quality pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, and extended school years.
- Create flexible time within the day for intervention, remediation and enrichment.
- Invest in full-service Community Schools that are open evenings, weekends and year-round.
- Eradicate the practice of labeling students in grades and instead allow them to learn at their own pace.
- Disconnect high school graduation from Carnegie Units.
- Invest in teacher learning time, above and separate from the time spent teaching students.

Reform initiatives have been created in silos with each effort standing alone waiting for the promise of being the thing that changes the entire system. Time has that possibility. The investment would be tremendous and the results astounding.

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Appendices

Appendix A

THE TIME FOR INNOVATION MATTERS IN EDUCATION (TIME) ACT Senator Edward Kennedy, Senator Jeff Bingaman and Senator Bernie Sanders

The 19th century school calendar of 180 days per year and 6.5 hours a day does not meet the educational demands of our 21st century economy. As we expect more from our students and teachers, we must provide them with the time they need to achieve – for students to increase learning, and for teachers to plan and collaborate to improve teaching.

International assessments of student learning show U.S. schoolchildren falling further behind – particularly among low-income students. But students and teachers in other countries have an advantage – more time. In the U.S., students generally spend just one-third of their waking hours in school, while students in other nations spend up to 30% more time mastering challenging academic subjects.

The TIME Act will provide high-quality expanded learning programs to ensure that students and teachers have the time they need to succeed in school.

The TIME Act:

- Authorizes \$350 million next year – and up to \$500 million in 2014 – to scale up effective reforms – based on practices in Massachusetts – to expand learning time for students by 30% and comprehensively redesign the school schedule.
- Provides additional time for needy students to catch up and master 21st century skills in key subjects such as reading, math, science, social studies, foreign languages, and other fields of study.
- Enriches the school curriculum, by lending greater time to music and the arts, physical education, and other opportunities for well-rounded learning, such as internships, mentoring, and service learning.

- Promotes partnerships between schools and community-based organizations in carrying out expanded learning models, to encourage broader learning opportunities.

- Provides additional time for teachers to plan together to improve teaching and learning, revise lesson plans, and collaborate in classrooms.

- Ensures a comprehensive evaluation and the national dissemination of best practices in expanding learning time, to improve student achievement, student engagement, teacher collaboration, and other key factors such as parent and teacher satisfaction.

AFT Resolution

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

WHEREAS, the American Federation of Teachers recognizes that five fundamental principles must govern the creation of community schools:

A. Community schools have a strong academic curriculum. The school and community must work together to ensure that students have a strong and rigorous curriculum that will further student success. The goal of academic success should inform all strategic partnership planning.

B. Community schools establish a set of coordinated and purposeful partnerships that integrate services for students, their families and the community, with the common goal of ensuring student success and building strong communities. Many schools offer after-school tutoring or a series of unconnected programs: These are not community schools. Their programs are too often unrelated to each other, disconnected from any academic mission or rigorous curriculum and lacking the kind of support built through partnerships that engender sustainability.

C. Community school partners may include a variety of providers and funders. They may be community based, regional or national organizations, and may have nonprofit, for-profit or faith-based status.

D. Community schools provide more than one type of service to students, parents and the community. These may include:

1. academic services, such as tutoring, community-based learning and other enrichment activities;
2. medical services, such as primary, vision, dental, wellness and nutritional services;
3. after-school recreational activities;
4. mental health services, such as counseling and psychiatry;
5. curricular tie-ins with local community employers and needs;
6. jobs and internships;
7. institutions of higher education, community colleges, English language skills and job development programs; and
8. a variety of social services.

E. Community schools are based on a comprehensive and strategic plan agreed to in writing (e.g., contracts, memoranda of agreement and memoranda of understanding) between the partner organization(s), including providers and funders, and the school. Written agreements are necessary for oversight of the school site(s) to avoid school governance and operations problems. Written agreements also provide a vehicle for planning and for creating scalable community school models with buy-in from all stakeholders.

WHEREAS, the AFT believes all students have a right to learn and achieve academic success regardless of where, or under what circumstances, they live. Too often, children from disadvantaged areas, whether in urban centers or rural communities, lack the additional supports other children have at home and in their communities that promote learning; and

WHEREAS, research shows that access to healthcare, social services and extended and additional learning and recreational opportunities, as well as increased parent involvement, are critical to student success. We cannot ensure that all students learn without closing the services gap for disadvantaged students; and

WHEREAS, when community schools are carefully designed and built with input from the community,

they are better able to accommodate the various services and activities they provide. Research finds that a well-designed, sustainable school environment supports academic goals and can significantly improve students' learning, productivity, health and overall well-being. Studies continue to show that student attendance is consistently better in sustainable, green schools; studies associate adequate ventilation, natural lighting and good acoustics with improved student performance. Students in sustainable community schools located in disadvantaged areas demonstrate real progress; and

WHEREAS, a community that is engaged in the school; promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful; and connects students to a broader learning community will help develop an informed and educated citizenry, strengthen family and community ties, and nurture democracy in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, by forging strategic partnerships, community schools have the potential to strengthen a school's academic program, engage parents and meet the varied needs of students as well as communities. Community schools connect and educate all partners to the issues of school, community and family life; and

WHEREAS, existing community school models—like the Children's Aid Society in New York City, the nationwide Communities In Schools, Beacon Schools, university-assisted community schools such as the schools being developed under the AFT's Innovation Fund grant in Philadelphia that supports the collaboration between the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and the University of Pennsylvania, and the locally developed Community Learning Centers in Cincinnati—provide established solutions that demonstrate how schools and communities can connect to help all students learn and thrive. These models provide examples of how to:

- manage space and resources;
- design new community schools, redesign existing schools and buildings and co-located spaces for community school use; and
- involve nonschool personnel and experts; and
- leverage support from outside organizations, including government, private not-for-profit and philanthropic organizations:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers:

- **urge locals to partner with school districts, local government entities, political leaders, and labor and community leaders to transform the schools serving our neediest students into community schools, to bring together, under one roof, the services and activities that our children and their families need;**
- **work with partner organizations and support affiliations with and coalitions of allies to solicit local needs from community members and to establish and promote community schools;**
- **support federal legislation and programs that fund community schools programs as part of a strategy to turn around struggling schools;**
- **support federal and state legislation that enables school districts to accelerate new construction and/or renovation of community schools to accommodate their various functions and to build them to green and sustainable standards such as those of the U.S. Green Building Council, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system or the Collaborative for High Performance Schools;**
- **assist states in developing enabling legislation and comprehensive strategies to institute community schools;**
- **call for ongoing, high-quality research into community schools' best practices, staffing models, approaches to implementation and student outcomes such as student learning and other outcomes;**
- **urge the federal government (U.S. Department of Education) to establish a database of community schools in the United States that can guide research;**

- **disseminate such findings to our locals and advocate for the consideration of those findings when modifying legislation like the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and other legislation, budgetary items and competitive grants;**
- **ensure that community schools enhance academic standards;**
- **ensure that community schools will not be used to bypass contractual agreements, reduce standards for existing, normal operating school hours, lessen those standards during after-hours operations, displace existing services and/or staff or weaken existing crucial health and safety regulations; and**
- **call for high-quality, ongoing, embedded staff development in community schools.**

**Learner—Centered Schools:
A Vision for the Future**

ADAM URBANSKI

What would schools be like 10 years from now if the reforms that we are pursuing were deepened and accelerated? How would teaching and learning change? In what ways would school governance and teachers' unions be different? What must communities do to sustain such a transformed educational system? This article lays out one scenario that is both possible and already in the making. It offers hope that we can begin to build tomorrow today and that if we can envision it, we can also achieve it.

AFTER MORE than a decade of education reform efforts, things today are more like yesterday than ever. The current reforms—such as career ladders for teachers, site-based management, changes in the evaluation of staff, and so forth—are necessary but not sufficient to improve teaching and learning substantially. These reforms are getting broader but seldom deeper. And whereas they have heightened the level of comfort that adults have with each other, these reforms too often are process fixated and adult oriented, they have rarely penetrated into the classroom, and they thus far have had little impact on students and their learning. When it comes to real change, it seems that too many favor reform only as long as it does not require any real change on their part.

REFORM FOR WHAT?

All this can change but, until now, reforms have not been radical enough. We repair and remodel the same system, rarely reinventing education. And for as long as reforms remain marginal, we remain permanently perched on the eve of revolution.

After so much talk and so many meetings, there is so little change. Granted, the impediments are numerous: too many mandates and not enough leadership, resources, and preparation; too little passion and not enough urgency; too much bureaucracy and not enough involvement of school-level practitioners; too many unrelated programs and not enough consensus on standards; too much adding on and not enough letting go; too much emphasis on doing longer and harder what we already do, and not enough emphasis on doing things differently; too much impatience and not enough appreciation for the reality that real change is real hard, takes real time, and needs real direction.

Despite the efforts of educators and others, reform remains rudderless. Virtually anything goes, no matter how minimally grounded in research or validated by what we already know about effective teaching and learning. It is education reform anarchy—with few, albeit notable, exceptions. We must focus reforms, and we must focus them on students and on learning.

CREATING A VISION

Reform, however, is drifting and floundering for yet another important reason: lack of a clear image of where it all leads. There is no compelling vision of what education would look like if we could sustain reforms for another decade or so.

To get reform moving again, we must “begin with the end in mind” (Covey, 1989, p.97), we must have a vision. Only then can we gain an understanding of where we are headed. And because change is inevitable and only growth is optional, even a vision must be subject to constant revision. By definition, the school of the future will always be in the future. Thus the honest answer to the question of when will reform be over is—never.

Based on conversations with my colleagues, and on listening to their hopes and aspirations, the following is a glimpse of one version of an emerging vision for a desired future—a peek at a scenario 10 years hence.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Ten years hence, the culture of our school system includes a shared commitment to a set of guiding principles that all children can learn and that we have a responsibility to educate all of them well; that student learning must be at the center of all school and school district efforts, and that decisions must be judged by how they advance the prospects that all students will learn better; that there can be no real excellence without equity, and that success must no longer be predictable by race, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status; and that the roles of educators and the design of schools must be predicated on a consensus about high and rigorous learning standards—what students should know, be able to do, and be like.

LEARNING

Ten years hence, what is learned is valued more than what is taught, and effective learning is viewed as inseparable from effective teaching. Learning is personalized and students learn “how to use their minds well” (Meier; 1992).

Learning by doing is now the norm, not the exception. Students are actively engaged, not passively subjected. Students talk more than teachers, and they “do stuff.” Learning itself is intellectually stimulating, real-to-life, and no longer de-contextualized. Students learn in un-graded and cooperative groups. Children of different ages and different abilities learn together, from each other, and at their own pace. Students with special needs are no longer segregated; they learn alongside “regular education” students.

Moreover, learning is no longer restricted to the classroom. Students are involved in school governance, community service, youth apprenticeships and internships, peer and cross-age tutoring, research, and independent study. Textbooks are relegated to the back of the room—along with encyclopedias, dictionaries, and other secondary sources of information. Students read literature, use original sources, conduct interviews, and access information through computer networks, terminals, and satellites. Communities—and beyond—have become virtual classrooms, and classrooms have become more viable communities. Fieldwork, as an extension of the classroom, replaces the field trip that was merely an excursion from the classroom.

Students learn “habits of mind” (Meier, 1992). They learn how to think, and not what to think. They construct their own meaning by learning to reflect, to raise essential questions, to see connections, to discover patterns, to solve problems, to make good decisions, to understand and value diversity, to work cooperatively with others, to take risks, and to manage change. The emphasis is not on rote memorization but rather on critical and creative thinking. Students learn how to learn, and how to produce knowledge—not just reproduce it.

Knowledge is no longer defined as just having information but rather as having the skills and ability to access information and to apply it usefully. Learning occurs the way the brain works and is a more accurate reflection of the way children will live and function as adults. And the curriculum, reflecting multiculturalism, is “inclusive and emancipated” (Goodwin, 1993). There is respect for, and accommodation of, the different learning styles and types of intelligence that students have. The question no longer is “How smart are they?” but rather “How are they smart?”

Assessments of student learning are no longer based on student guesswork. The paper-and-pencil-only multiple choice tests have been replaced by more authentic, diversified, and performance-based systems of assessment that offer many options for demonstrating knowledge and skills and that in themselves promote and extend learning: exhibitions, projects, demonstrations, portfolios, simulations, products, tasks, and application of knowledge. The new assessments are done over time, are received through multiple sources, and are embedded in teaching and learning. They determine not only what students know but also what they are able to do. Through “standards without standardization” (Wiggins, 1991), students are assessed according to the progress they make, not by comparison with others.

Students believe that their success hinges largely on their own effort, not just on innate ability, circumstances, or time served. They know that employers will see not only their diplomas but also samples of their work in school—as will college admissions personnel. Students have more reasons and better incentives to try their best, and they therefore assume greater responsibility for their own learning. Thus schools are no longer places “where the relatively young come to watch the relatively old do work” (Schlechty, 1990).

All students are expected to meet quality standards and to be well prepared to think for a living. Therefore, achievement, not the amount of time served, determines promotion to the next level or graduation. Time is the variable and quality the constant so that all students can progress at their own pace. And all children now have access to the kind of challenging and rich curriculum that used to be reserved for the few—just 10 years ago.

TEACHING

Ten years hence, teachers are paid and treated like true professionals. Because they are closest to the classroom and to the students, they have the most authority, the most status, and the most money. Teachers command salaries and have working conditions comparable to those of other professions with similar educational requirements and importance of function. They no longer have to lament that they love to

teach but hate their job. Teachers have their own offices, office hours, secretaries, and telephones; they even have unrestricted access to a copying machine. They have ample preparation time during the school day and control over the use of time for planning, curriculum work, consultation, and collaboration with colleagues, parents, and students. And they are not saddled with paralyzing paperwork or with excessive non-teaching and non-instructional tasks.

Teachers work side by side with their educational partners, the instructional paraprofessionals. Together they model teamwork for their students and help to ensure that children have ample opportunities to receive personalized attention. The paraprofessionals are involved in the design and delivery of the instructional programs and strategies. They are respected and valued as the instructional facilitators that they are.

Teachers have a shared knowledge base. No longer does the public believe that all you have to do to be a good teacher is to love to teach; after all, they never believed that all you have to do to be a surgeon is to love to cut. Teachers know their students well and know how to teach them effectively. They are generalists first, and then specialists in their own respective disciplines. They are knowledgeable about content areas, how the brain works, and how learning occurs. They are experts in child and adolescent development and adult learning. They are knowledgeable about, and sensitive to, the race, class, and gender diversity of the environment in which they teach, and the ranks of educators are representative of that diversity.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, two thirds of whom are board-certified teachers elected by their peers, makes judgments about what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do—and certifies those who meet these high and rigorous standards. Emergency teaching licenses have no more validity than would emergency medical licenses; provisional teacher licenses no more than would provisional architect licenses; temporary teacher licenses no more than would temporary attorney licenses. All teachers are fully prepared for practice. Developed by teachers themselves, professional standards are now routinely upheld through peer review. The consensus among teachers is that no one knows the difference between good teaching and bad teaching better than the best teachers themselves.

New teachers are inducted into the profession with assistance from mentors—experienced and expert colleagues who guide their initial steps in teaching. Novices do not have to learn their job in solitude, by trial and error. Through professional practice schools, the world of teaching is connected to teacher preparation in ways that no longer tolerate a wide gulf between theory and practice.

With increased collegiality, teachers have broken the isolation that historically characterized their professional existence. Through teacher exchange opportunities, they spend time teaching in other schools, other levels, and other settings. They engage in continuous conversations with each other, across levels and across discipline. They teach in teams, hold conferences about individual students, observe each other teach, and participate in developing and assessing each other's work. They have the time to collaborate, to learn from each other, and to plan—together not just as an afterthought, on weekends, or at the end of a long day's work but built into the professional day. To make that possible, teachers and other staff have ample time without student contact. They view their professional development and appraisal as inseparable from the actual work that they do.

Teachers, in collaboration with parents and others, are the primary decision makers about the instructional needs for their students. They exercise professional discretion routinely and thoughtfully, not limiting themselves to any single approach or strategy. They seek access to expertise and decide how to use it. Task forces, commissions, panels, and teleconferences routinely feature full-time practitioners as experts on teaching and learning.

Teachers, not textbook publishers, have control over the curriculum. They also control professional standards, professional practice, the hiring of colleagues and administrators, and their own professional development. They have not only a seat, but also a voice.

Teachers' work is matched appropriately with the teachers' respective stage of development in the profession. Those with the greatest experience and highest level of expertise teach the most challenging assignments. They also serve as mentors to new teachers, as adjunct professors at teacher preparation programs, as professional development experts, as curriculum specialists, as demonstrators of new practice, and in other instructional and professional leadership roles. Teachers can be promoted in teaching without being simultaneously promoted out of teaching. They can achieve higher pay and be given more responsibilities and greater autonomy without abandoning the classroom.

Teachers have the time to think systematically about their work, constantly learning, discussing, assessing, and adjusting their practice. They don't stop learning when they start teaching. They read professional journals and books. They continuously review and question their own practice and that of their colleagues. They contribute to research and validate research of others. They speak and write publicly about their work. Their discourse and reflection is informed by examples and practice in other schools, other countries, other fields, and other sectors of society. They use methods that incorporate different learning and teaching styles and varied cultural experiences.

Unexamined tradition has now yielded to reflective practice that is both responsible and responsive to students' needs (Darling-Hammond, 1985). Lecturing is occasional and usually to large groups, to make it more possible for other colleagues to have small-group seminars and other activities. Because teachers spend less time lecturing, they spend more time guiding, facilitating, and supporting what students do—provoking students to learn how to learn and how to teach themselves.

Teacher professionalism is defined not just by what teachers know and are able to do but also by what teachers value, namely, what commitments and principles they hold for themselves and for students. Professional practice, therefore, is viewed as both skilled service and the application of virtue (Sergiovanni, 1992). Bureaucratic adherence to rules and regulations has been replaced by accountability to the clients, the students and their parents. "Doing right by kids" is the moral imperative for teachers. All adults have strong incentives to make schools ever more effective for all students. These incentives are both intrinsic and extrinsic. They emphasize capacity building, not rewards and punishments; they are for groups as well as for individuals.

Teachers no longer feel the obligation to cover the curriculum; they view their job as helping students to uncover the curriculum and to connect it to their experiences and to their lives. If students are not learning the way that teachers teach, then teachers teach the way that students learn. Teachers participate in nurturing their students' readiness to

learn. They serve as advisors to small groups of students. They meet with these students each day and ensure that there is effective communication between the school and home. They stay with their students for more than a single year. This guarantees that there is an informed context for every need that arises for each student. Teachers recognize that teaching kids must be preceded by reaching kids, because they do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.

Teachers are respected and valued as experts on teaching and learning. They live up to such expectations by continuously reflecting on their practice and by employing knowledge that is research based and validated by practice. Doing right by kids no longer necessitates engaging in creative insubordination. Evaluations and assessments are now by peers and clients—bottom up, not top down; all are evaluated by those with whom they work and by those whom they serve no less than by those to whom they report. Evaluations scrutinize practices, not just practitioners. And the outcomes of teacher evaluations are represented as “useful advice, not ratings” (L. Darling-Hammond, personal communication, March 23, 1993). The perfunctory checklist inspection of teachers’ work has been phased out. And teaching has become so attractive as a profession that graduates from medical schools, law schools, and engineering schools prepare for and apply to teach in our schools—a phenomenon unthinkable just 10 years ago.

SCHOOL

Ten years hence, school is no longer synonymous with a building, and architecture no longer dictates pedagogy. Each school exists within a metropolitan system of public schools of choice—thus equalizing resources, permitting more genuine integration, and encouraging healthy competition yet fostering cooperation inside each school and among individual practitioners. Each school is a self-governing community of learners — a “center of inquiry” (Schaefer, 1967) with its own ethos, its own theme, and its own character. Differences among schools are now cause for celebration and choice, not concern.

There are many types of schools: Some are schools-within-schools; others are “satellite” schools at places of employment or in the same building with other, unrelated enterprises. Some are not even schools as places: they are tele-networks and learning centers. But all schools are small communities where students are well-known, reducing isolation and anonymity while personalizing schooling. These schools are interesting places for children and adults. They are linked electronically, and by computers, to each other as well as to libraries, museums, universities, and to other community resources.

The instructional program in each school is governed by the school’s instructional design team, which is made up of administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and, in high school, students as well. The team makes decisions affecting the school’s instructional programs, including budget plans, staffing, the student discipline code, and all other key dynamics. Top-down management has been replaced by shared governance, and authority by position has yielded to leadership by example. Rule-driven values have been replaced by value-driven rules. Even the rigidity of the 9 a.m.-to-3 p.m. school day, and the September – to-June school year, no longer governs school time.

There are no neat, straight aisles in these classrooms, no arbitrary 47-minute periods, no artificial separation of subject matter, no sifting and sorting or tracking and labeling of students. Instructional technology is no longer merely for “enrichment” but rather central to the redesign of how teaching and learning is organized. It helps teachers and students to access a wealth of knowledge and information from all over the world. Classes meet two or three times a week, not necessarily each day. There are no more pullouts; all certificated staff, including administrators, teach. This helps make it possible to significantly reduce the student-to-adult ratio.

Recognizing that student success is not only the result of positive self-concept but also the cause of it, adults now view their job as inventing opportunities for students to succeed—without lowering quality or standards. And in each school there is a case manager whose job is to coordinate health and social services for children.

The school is organized to promote learning and the intellectual life of students and adults. Routinely, students witness adults “argue about interesting things”(Meier, 1987) and frequently join in the conversations. The school is managed by a principal teacher or a teaching principal—subject to evaluation by the faculty and the school community.

Recognizing that we cannot teach what we do not model, adults ensure that students have opportunities to observe democratic dynamics and a passion for learning. With guidance from adults, students create the rules for their classrooms and for their school. By participating, they gain respect for—and experience with—the democratic process and have a commitment to the standards that they helped to set for themselves.

All adults on the school staff teach students. There are many other adults in the school, in addition to the school staff, who help enrich the life of the school and increase opportunities for students: business people, artists, community leaders, political figures, senior citizens, college and university professors, college students, family members. Educators seek and incorporate their knowledge and their expertise. The school staff initiates and welcomes frequent contact and communication with the families of their students. They respond with respect to the parents’ overtures and encourage them to become active partners in the education of their children and in designing the school’s programs and activities.

School is a joyful celebration of learning—with laughter, spirited debates, and absorbed conversations. Students feel a sense of belonging, are respected, and show respect for others and for learning. The school has more home-like settings: comfortable furniture, dining rooms that do not segregate adults from students, no hallway passes, no bathroom slips, no locked doors. Student discipline now reflects an emphasis on self-discipline rather than external controls, on logical consequences rather than punishment, on responsibility rather than obedience, and on early childhood education and prevention rather than on allowing students with problems to become problem students through neglect. Schools now are safe places for everyone—free of violence, fear, and disorder. Schools encourage cooperation as a way of resolving conflict and promoting nonviolent solutions to problems. Every school establishes and maintains its own policies and standards for behavior. These policies are ethical, professionally defensible, and reflect the shared values of the entire school community.

Schools remain open for after-school activities, for learning opportunities, and for participation by the community. Students’ families feel welcome in the school and are

actively involved in decisions affecting their children's instructional programs and school life. Their frequent presence at the school makes them, the students, and schools more accountable,

The effectiveness of a school is assessed not by how high the highest scoring students score but rather by how many successful learning opportunities have been created for all children — a far cry from the mechanistic measurements prevalent just 10 years ago.

GOVERNANCE

Ten years hence, leadership is shared and defined by how many others are involved rather than how many others are affected. Administrators and managers view it as their responsibility to provide necessary top-down support for bottom-up reform. Recognizing that progress cannot be caused by exhortation alone, they ensure sufficient and equitable distribution of resources. They actively support instructional reform, ensure an environment safe for innovation, and invest in teacher development.

The bureaucratic model has been replaced by a democratic structure built on the assumption of the consent of the governed (D. L. Clark, personal communication, November 23, 1988). Central Office is no longer a “headquarters” but rather a service center whose functions are evaluated by the schools they serve. Schools now have a choice between purchasing services and supplies from Central Office or other vendors— or taking the money equivalent, instead. The board of education now resembles a board of directors, meeting less often and refraining from micromanaging the work of the professionals. Instead, they coordinate the health and social services for children who needed them but often lacked access to them—just 10 years ago.

THE UNION

Ten years hence, the teachers' union is viewed as the major player in bringing about the reforms that have transformed schools and education. It has done so by working with other partners whenever possible and by promoting reform without permission when necessary.

Features of industrial unionism have yielded to changes that offer the promise of making public education more effective for all children. And the scope of collective bargaining has been extended to include negotiations on professional issues—not just wages, benefits and working conditions. The union promotes practices and dynamics such as peer review; differentiated staffing and differentiated pay; public school choice; professional accountability; involvement of parents, students, and peers in teacher evaluations; and staffing of schools and transfers of staff based on criteria other than seniority alone.

Considering itself to be the voice of the profession, as well as the voice of the practitioners, the teachers' union now spends as much energy and as many resources on the professional needs of its members as it does on collective bargaining, contract enforcement, economic benefits, and other basic traditional union functions. Recognizing

that the welfare of the union and its members hinges on the effectiveness of the profession within which it exists, the teachers' union has formalized its commitment to reform.

A new kind of teachers' union has emerged, a union committed to lead change in unions as well as in education. This new teachers' union considers unionism and professionalism as complementary and not mutually exclusive; it helps its members to become agents of reform and not remain the passive targets of reform; it views the negotiated contract as the floor and not the ceiling for what union members are willing to do for students; and, recognizing its responsibility to work to protect the public and the students from harmful practice and ineffective schools, the union views itself as the guardian of standards in the profession. The very idea of a teachers' union has been significantly transformed from the model that prevailed just 10 years ago.

THE COMMUNITY

Ten years hence, this vision exists within the context of a community that understands that high educational standards can exist only when there are high civic standards, high moral standards, and high standards for equity. The entire community recognizes that education is not just schooling, and that schools cannot be oases of accountability in a desert of apathy and indifference. Education reform is viewed as a matter of shared accountability and is accompanied by reforms in health care, housing, childcare, job training, social welfare, and juvenile justice. And accountability for rebuilding the community is shared: Everyone and each constituency are responsible for that which is—or ought to be—within their control. Successful education of children is viewed in this community as a dual agenda: Educators have the responsibility to make schools ready for all children, and the rest of community shares the responsibility to ensure that all children are ready to learn. Schools are no longer expected to do it all alone—as they were just 10 years ago.

VISION INTO REALITY

This vision describes the culture 10 years hence, but the work toward it must begin now. Yet any vision is only a pipe dream unless created twice: first as a mental image, then as the actualization of it. And nowhere is this more needed or more difficult than in education today.

Change does not come easily. The problem with today's schools is not that they are no longer as good as they once were, rather it is that they are precisely as they always were—whereas the needs of our students and our society have changed so significantly. Reform, the translation of a vision into reality, is a search. Along the way there will be false starts, wrong turns, negative findings, and pain. But the pangs of adjustment are evidence that the changes are real.

It can be done, it is just that it cannot be done easily. We can succeed if we are passionate about change and if we can commit for the long haul. We can succeed if we promote equal partnerships, cooperation, and unity without unanimity and without

uniformity. First, however, we must instigate a revolution of rising expectations and create the kind of a vision that would inspire others to aspire to more. Then we must continue to do the hard work that is unavoidable when the agenda is so ambitious. We must begin to build tomorrow today. And when we succeed, we will build stronger educational communities, a more genuine teaching profession, and more effective schools for all our students.

If we can envision it, we can also achieve it.

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