

Expanded Learning Time
Myths v. Realities

<i>Myths</i>	<i>Realities</i>
<p><i>“A longer school day is a punishment for underperforming schools.”</i></p>	<p>Expanded Learning Time unlocks teachers and students from the confines of a 6-hour schedule, enabling schools to provide a learning environment that is stimulating, engaging and addresses all levels and styles of learning. Massachusetts and the United States as a whole lag behind most industrialized countries and some developing countries in instructional hours per week and total learning hours per year.</p> <p>Expanded Learning Time is about redesigning the school day so we can better prepare all students for life in the 21st century. More time allows schools to implement a richer, more varied school schedule that provides a high quality, well-rounded education to all students, regardless of academic level or socio-economic status.</p>
<p><i>“Expanded Learning Time is only for poor, urban schools.”</i></p>	<p>All students – urban, suburban and rural – can benefit from a redesigned day. High stakes testing and accountability with no additional time has forced schools to focus primarily on instruction in math and English/Language Arts. Important subjects such as science and social studies have been reduced, and enrichment activities – including arts, music, sports, and technology – have been greatly reduced, if not eliminated, in many schools. Every student benefits from the core academic time and reintroduced enrichment programs in the expanded day.</p> <p>While the first cohort of schools to expand their school day was predominantly urban, the second round of schools will include suburban and rural schools. A redesigned and expanded school day can be beneficial to all schools and all students.</p>
<p><i>“The expanded day takes away too much family time. I want my child home in the afternoons.”</i></p>	<p>In most cases, a student’s school day will end by 4pm, long before the dinner hour and time spent with family in the evening. For example, at the Martin Luther King, Jr. School in Cambridge, the school day goes from 7:55am to 3:55pm, and at the Salemwood School in Malden, the school day goes from 7:45am to 3:30pm.</p> <p>With a calendar of 180 six-hour days, children spend only 20% of their waking hours in school. ELT school</p>

	<p>schedules – which lengthen the school day by 25% – increase students’ time spent in school by just 6% of their overall waking hours.</p> <p>Students in ELT schools often report spending more relaxing and less stressful family time because they have the opportunity to complete most of their homework with assistance during their expanded day.</p>
<p><i>“Making the school day longer won’t solve the problem – it’s just more of the same.”</i></p>	<p>Expanded Learning Time does not mean simply tacking on extra hours to the day. With a redesigned and expanded day, ELT schools have more time for science, social studies, and foreign languages, and more effective math and literacy programs.</p> <p>These schools have significantly expanded enrichment courses and now offer more art, music, and physical education, as well as courses like robotics, drama, and video production that interest children and excite them about school. Teachers have used the extra time to engage students in hands-on projects and help them learn in innovative ways.</p> <p>They are also able to better teach the diverse levels of learners in each class – allowing them to accelerate the students who are doing well and better support the students who are struggling.</p>
<p><i>“A longer school day will leave my child too tired and bored.”</i></p>	<p>At many schools, the current schedule with short class periods leaves teachers and students feeling rushed throughout the day.</p> <p>An expanded school day provides students with the opportunity to learn at a more reasonable and effective pace and be engaged by the hands-on, project-based learning that Expanded Learning Time affords. Attendance at ELT schools has improved in part because students are the opposite of bored – they are excited about the significantly expanded enrichment courses in art, music and physical education.</p>
<p><i>“Funding for Expanded Learning Time will eventually be a strain on my local property taxes.”</i></p>	<p>It is important to note that this is a state grant program; it is additional money coming to our community from the state. As with any grant program, there will always be concerns about the funding continuing over time. The best case we can make for continuation of the grant program is success.</p>

	<p>We believe that by undertaking this process, we are doing a worthwhile and very meaningful review of what our school does well and areas that may need to be improved. We will also look at how redesigning the school schedule can help us to provide our students with the best education we can.</p> <p>We are committed to exploring a redesigned and expanded school day and we believe that our students, parents, teachers and community partners will all see positive results from the process.</p>
<p><i>“A longer school day will interfere with my child’s after school activities.”</i></p>	<p>A key component of successful Expanded Learning Time programs is partnerships with community-based organizations, including programs that have traditionally been after-school programs. The partnerships with community organizations have led to enrichment classes from which the entire student population benefits, including rock climbing, instrument lessons, art and swimming.</p> <p>In many communities, community organizations have also been flexible with their scheduling to accommodate the students’ later schedule. Additionally, there is often still a need for after-school programs to fill in the time between when school lets out and when parents return from work.</p>