



NEWS RELEASE
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Extended School Day Programs Need ‘Afterschool Approach’

New Issue Brief Urges Policy Makers Looking at Extending School Day To Consider Lessons Learned from the Afterschool Experience

Washington, DC -- New policies to extend the school day will be more likely to succeed if schools embrace an “afterschool approach” that gives students more diverse learning opportunities, more real-world experiences, more connections to community groups, more interaction with caring adults, and more opportunities to prepare for college and employment. That is the conclusion of *Expanding Learning Opportunities: It Takes More than Time*, a new issue brief released this month by the Afterschool Alliance.

In the last few years, policy makers and educators have begun to consider extending the school day as a way to improve academic achievement. Some states, cities and districts have begun implementing longer school days, including New York City and selected schools in Massachusetts. Lawmakers in Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Minnesota and Pennsylvania and elsewhere have considered similar measures.

It Takes More than Time points out that “more of the same” may not improve academic achievement or reduce dropout rates. It quotes Jane Quinn of Children’s Aid Society, who said: “My worry now is that we might lengthen the school day and school year in very conventional and ineffective ways: by adding more of the kinds of education that, in too many cases, don’t work well during our current six-hour school day. I see danger in reflexively extending the school day, when what we really need is to imaginatively extend learning opportunities.”

“Quality afterschool programs don’t simply treat the afternoon hours as an extension of what goes on during the regular school day,” says Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Afterschool programs provide enrichment opportunities, involve community partners, get kids outdoors where they can be active, offer field trips that allow them to explore new interests, and more. Kids absolutely need classroom time, but they also need to have their imaginations engaged in other ways – ways that can’t be tucked neatly into a regular school day. That’s why it’s critical that policy makers remember that any extension of the school day should incorporate the afterschool approach.”

It Takes More than Time cites seven key components to the proven afterschool approach to learning:

- Academic instruction is designed to meet the needs, abilities and learning styles of students and provide them with a better chance to succeed;
- Engaging, relevant activities are often project-based, community-based or both, and designed to increase student motivation to learn;
- Linkages are made to the school day, but content is delivered in different ways by applying school day lessons to real world settings;
- Student choice is built into program design;
- Partnerships among schools and community-based organizations are essential because they bring new and diverse learning opportunities;
- Students have opportunities to work both independently and in groups, and to play leadership roles; and
- Communication between families and school-day staff is ongoing.

“It’s essential that policy makers not simply stretch out the school day,” Grant added. “More classroom time will help some kids, certainly. But afterschool has demonstrated that classroom time isn’t the only – and sometimes it isn’t the best – way to help kids achieve. We need to learn lessons from the afterschool experience, and apply them to efforts to extend the school day.”

It Takes More than Time is part of a series of *Afterschool Alert: Issue Briefs* available on the Afterschool Alliance website. Other briefs cover a variety of issues related to afterschool, including teacher recruitment and retention; programs’ focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics; obesity prevention; the arts; child safety; and more. The new brief is available for download at www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_br.cfm.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

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