

Innovative School Schedules: Recommendations to Enhance Student Achievement



A Report for the Maryland State Board of Education

May 2017

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Innovative School Schedule Workgroup Members

Workgroup Chair: **Tiara Booker-Dwyer**
Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement
Maryland State Department of Education

Afie Mirshah-Nayar
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals

Andy Warner
Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association

Beth Allshouse
Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals

Dana McCauley
Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals

Ellie Mitchell
Maryland Out Of School Time Network

Elizabeth Ysla Leight
Maryland Parent Teacher Association

Emily Dow
Maryland Higher Education Commission

Gabriel Rose
Pupil Transportation, Maryland State Department of Education

Jennifer Martin
Maryland State Education Association

Joy Schaefer
Maryland Association of Boards of Education

Laura Weeldreyer
Maryland State Board of Education

Lisa Brown
New Song Academy

Marcella Franczkowski
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Maryland State Department of Education

Mary Gable
Division of Academic Policy and Innovation, Maryland State Department of Education

Mary McCormick
Maryland Business Roundtable for Education/Hopkins Health

Michele Guyton
Maryland State Board of Education

Neil Ross
Baltimore Teachers Union

Nichelle Owens
Montgomery County Public Schools

Robin Ziegler
Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs, Maryland State Department of Education

Shawn Gardner
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals

Innovative School Schedules: Recommendations to Enhance Student Achievement

Introduction

Nationally, the traditional school calendar consists of 180 days and approximately 720-1,080 instructional hours (Bush, Ryan, & Rose, 2011). In an effort to reduce the achievement gap, several schools have begun to implement innovative schedules aimed at improving student learning (Farbman, Christie, Davis, Griffith, & Zinth, 2011). Innovative schedules, as defined by Education Article §7-103.1 in the Annotated Code of Maryland, are school scheduling models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time. Examples of innovative schedules include but are not limited to extended year, extended week, extended day, and year-round schooling.

On October 25, 2016, members of the State Board of Education requested that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) explore the use of innovative school schedules and develop recommendations for schedules that may increase academic gains for students in low-performing schools. As a result, MSDE convened a workgroup to explore and make recommendations on innovative school schedules that have the potential to increase student academic achievement, with a focus on expanding the school day and year. The workgroup was charged to identify:

- Innovative schedules that increase academic gains for students at different grade bands;
- Effective use of time for different innovative scheduling models;
- Effective structure, staffing, and financing models for innovative schedules; and
- Promising practices and lessons learned from other states that have implemented extended learning time programs.

The Innovative School Schedule Workgroup met once a month from January through April 2017. Workgroup members reviewed and discussed research for and implementation of innovative school schedules. National experts and representatives from local school systems were invited to present research findings and implementation strategies to the workgroup. Presentations from the National Center on Time and Learning, Center on Education Policy, Montgomery County Public Schools, and New Song Academy in Baltimore City along with reviews from education articles helped to inform recommendations in this report.

Innovative School Schedules in Maryland

Maryland public schools are required to open for pupil attendance for 180 days and a minimum of 1,080 hours for grades K-8 and 1,170 hours for grades 9-12 during a ten month period. Several school systems currently implement extended time options for students to accelerate or recover credits during the evening, weekend, or summer. Through the use of grants, state funds, and/or federal funds, school system leaders have provided options for students to receive additional instruction beyond the traditional school schedule. Example school systems are identified below.

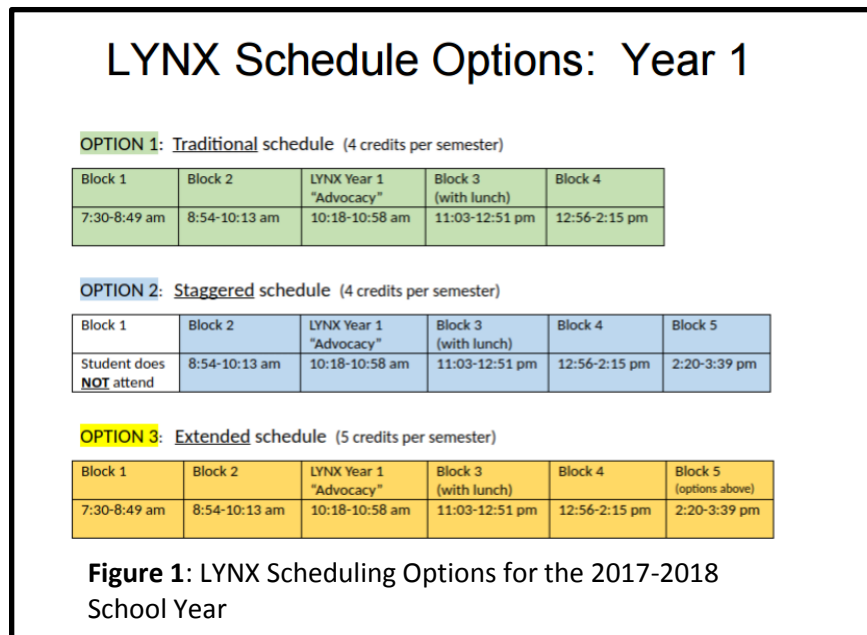
Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County Public Schools use Title I funds to reduce the effects of summer learning loss through their summer extended learning opportunities programs. Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) and Summer Title I Enrichment Program (STEP) are five week programs that focus on engaging students in grades K-5 in rigorous mathematics, English Language Arts, and science curriculum in preparation for the upcoming school year. Through these programs, students receive approximately 75 additional hours of instruction prior to the start of the next school year (Montgomery County Public Schools, 2017).

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Frederick County Public Schools

In fall 2017, Linking Youth to New Experiences (LYNX) High School will open for student attendance. The school will implement a flexible scheduling model that will allow students to choose from three scheduling options. Option one is a traditional school schedule. Option two is a staggered schedule that allows students to start and end the school day at a later time. Option three is an extended schedule that allows students to take more credits during a longer school day. The flexible scheduling structure provides students with the option to take courses in the afternoon or evening and participate in off-campus learning experiences (LYNX at Frederick High, 2017).



Baltimore City Public Charter and New Initiative Schools

Several charter schools and a new initiative school in Baltimore City implement innovative schedules. These schedules allow students to receive additional instructional support and provide the opportunity for educators to enhance their professional practice. For example, Baltimore Collegiate School for Boys operates an intersession calendar. During intersessions, teachers and administrators engage in professional learning experiences. Intersession has allowed school staff to visit and learn effective practices from schools in other states and it has allowed them to analyze and reflect on data to improve school operations. KIPP Harmony Academy operates an extended school year which allows their students additional time to engage in academic content and extracurricular experiences. Lillie May Carroll Jackson and New Song Academy extend the required 180 day school calendar beyond ten months to minimize summer learning loss. Additionally, New Song Academy provides the opportunity for students to participate in after school instructional experiences to extend learning beyond the traditional school day (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2017).

Although several Maryland schools implement innovative schedules, there is not a strategic approach at the state level to provide guidance to school system leaders on effective practices for implementing innovative schedules; to monitor fidelity of schedule implementation; or to assess impact of innovative schedules on student achievement. The recommendations in this report seek to establish a foundation for the implementation of innovative school schedules that enhance student achievement.

Recommendations

Detailed in the following pages are recommendations for innovative school schedules to enhance student achievement. Recommendations include the rationale for the recommendation, potential challenges for implementing the recommendation, and necessary state actions to implement recommendations.

It should be noted that scheduling alone is not sufficient to raise student performance. As a result, recommendations in this report address how additional time should be used and who should facilitate learning experiences during extended time schedules. Each recommendation was informed by key findings from research and presentations during innovative school schedule workgroup sessions.

Education Article §7-103.1 requires the State Board to explore the use of innovative school scheduling models that do not allow for prolonged lapses in instructional time in low-performing or at-risk public schools. The State Board shall encourage local boards to use the school scheduling models that are determined to be most effective in enhancing student achievement in low-performing or at-risk public schools. Research supports that adding additional time for instruction increases academic gains for all students, not just those at low-performing schools (Kidron & Lindsay, 2014). As a result, identified recommendations in this report are for **all students**.

Recommendation 1: Extend the school year instead of extending the school day or week.

Rationale

Summer Learning Loss:

Academic gains made during the school year may be lost during summer months if students are not engaged in continuous learning. On average, all students lose approximately one month of learning over the summer. However, summer learning loss disproportionately impacts students from low-income families who may not have access to high-quality educational resources during summer months. Students from low-income families may lose approximately two months of reading and mathematics achievement during the summer break. Summer learning loss becomes cumulative over the course of a student’s academic career thus contributing to the achievement gap between students from low-income and high-income households (McCombs, et al., 2011). Extending the school day or week would not be sufficient to reduce the impact of summer learning loss.

Start School Later Movement:

There is a growing movement to adjust school hours to align with the circadian rhythm of adolescents. Several Maryland school systems have convened stakeholder groups to explore beginning the school day at a later time. In support of this movement, Maryland was the first state to enact legislation that awards an Orange Ribbon to school systems that implement healthy school hours. If school system leaders decide to implement an innovative schedule that extends the school day, then it may require students to come to school earlier and/or stay later. As a result, extending the school day may not be in alignment with the start school later movement.

Transportation Schedules:

School hours are connected to the bus schedule for a school system. Often, school systems will use the same bus to transport elementary, middle, and high school students. As a result, extending the school day by as little as fifteen minutes can create difficulties in coordinating bus schedules. Additionally, several Maryland students experience long commute times. Extending the school day in these communities may result in students being transported during non-optimal hours which may impact the safety of students.

Extracurricular Experiences:

Extracurricular experiences such as sports, bands, clubs, and other learning experiences that occur before or after the school day play an important role in fostering the growth of well-rounded students. Extracurricular schedules may require students to leave school early to participate in sports or other learning experiences. As a result, extending the school day may negatively impact extracurricular schedules requiring practices, competitions, and games to be scheduled late in the evening or early in the morning to minimize disruptions to the instructional day. Extending the school week may adversely impact participation in extracurricular experiences as several students participate in events during the weekend.

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For the reasons described above, the Innovative School Schedule Workgroup recommends extending the school year instead of extending the school day or week.

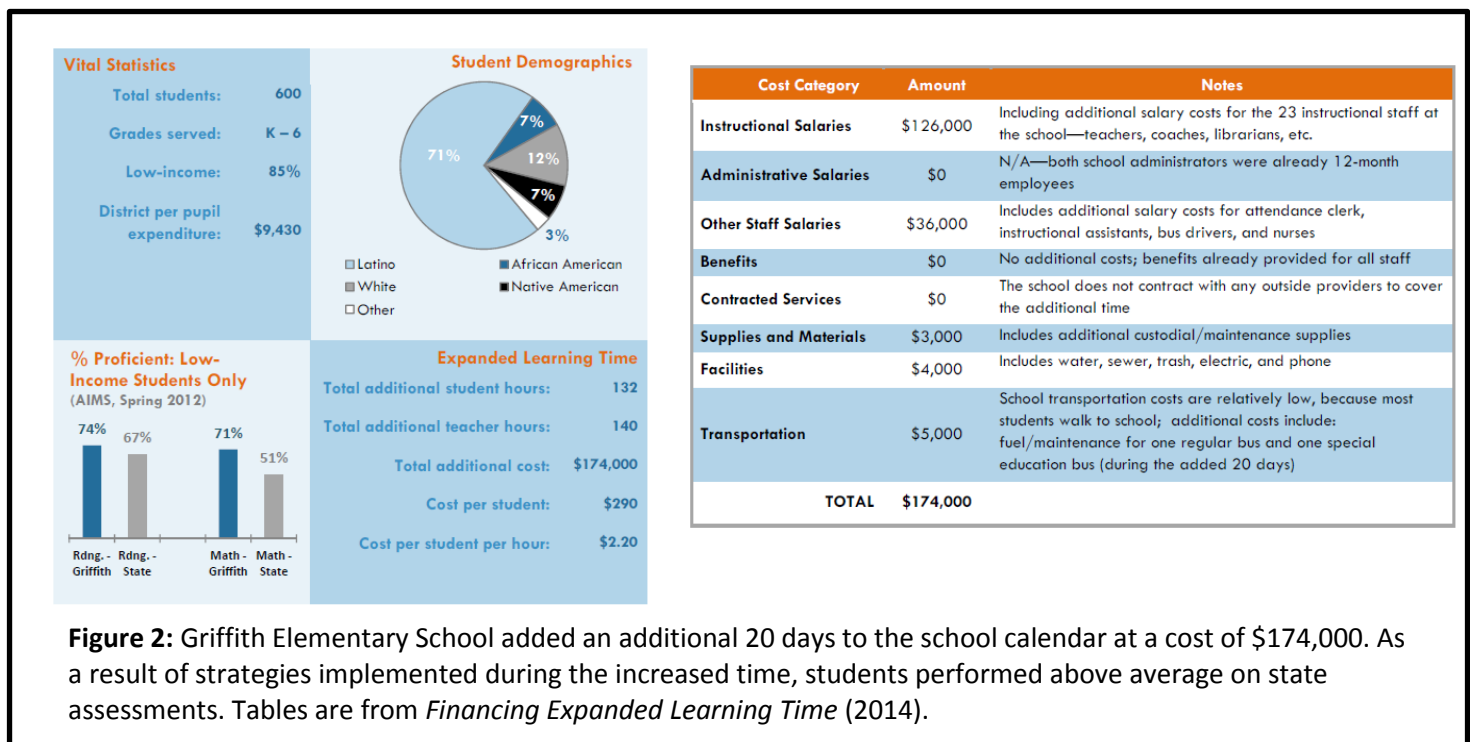
Challenges to Extending the School Year

Costs:

Modifying the school year will require school systems to incur additional costs for salaries, benefits, facilities, supplies, materials, and transportation. Costs can range between \$2.20 to \$5.23 per pupil per hour in schools that add between 132 and 540 hours to their schedule (Kaplan, Farbman, Deich, & Padgette, 2014). Additionally, going beyond the ten month school year may require school systems to renegotiate teacher contracts with collective bargaining units. As a result, extending the school year may be the most costly innovative school schedule option. However, it is expected to yield the greatest return on investment for enhancing student achievement in Maryland.

Example Costs for Extending the School Year: Griffith Elementary School in Arizona

Griffith is a K-6 school that extended its school year from 180 days to 200 days. The addition of twenty days to the school year cost the school \$174,000. Additional time was used to provide targeted support to students in reading and mathematics and to provide teachers additional time for professional development and data analysis. The implementation of this innovative schedule translated into improved performance on the state’s reading and math assessments (refer to figure 2).



Hiring Timelines:

Extending the school year may impact the timeline that school systems have to hire and train new employees or to make staffing changes. Summer months provide the opportunity for school system leaders to prepare schools for the upcoming school year by filling vacant positions and training staff. Adding additional instructional days during the summer months will condense the hiring timeline.

Teacher Compensation:

Teachers often use summer months to pursue opportunities to supplement their income. Adding additional days to the school year may impact supplemental income that teachers could earn. To overcome this challenge, it is recommended that school system leaders collaborate with collective bargaining units to adjust teaching salaries to compensate for additional instructional time.

Suggested State Actions

Modify state law.

Current state regulations require schools to open for pupil attendance for a minimum of 180 days during a ten month period. The ten month period begins after Labor Day and ends by June 15. Executive Order 01.01.2016.13, allows the Maryland State Board of Education to waive the required school start and end date for low-performing, at-risk, or charter schools that adopt innovative school schedules. Allowing a school system to go beyond ten months would reduce summer learning loss. It is recommended that the state modify the law to allow any school to apply for a waiver to go beyond ten months to implement an innovative school schedule.

Recommendation 2: Provide funding for school systems to plan, pilot, implement, and sustain innovative schedules.

Rationale

Additional costs are incurred as a result of adding additional time to the school year. A study by the National Center on Time and Learning suggests that it could cost between \$2.20 and \$5.23 per pupil per hour in school systems that add between 132 and 540 hours to the school year (Kaplan, Farbman, Deich, & Padgette, 2014). The table below from the National Center on Time and Learning, *Financing Expanded Learning Time in Schools* (2014), summarizes additional costs incurred for the implementation of extended time schedules.

School/ District/ District Per Pupil Expenditure	Grades/ # Students/ % Low Income	Added Time			Makes possible....
		Total Additional Student Hours (annual)	Total Additional Expenditure	Per Pupil Additional/ Cost Per Hour	
Griffith Elementary Balsz (Phoenix), AZ \$9,430	K – 6 600 studs. LI: 85%	132	\$174,000	\$ 290 \$ 2.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Daily intervention blocks ✓ Shift of more instructional days to occur before state assessment ✓ Weekly professional development
Dr. Orlando Edreira Academy Elizabeth, NJ \$17,143	K – 8 524 studs. LI: 81%	430	\$717,294	\$ 1,369 \$ 3.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cross-disciplinary curriculum and classes ✓ Enrichment and foreign languages ✓ Collaborative planning for teachers
McGlone Elementary Denver, CO \$ 8,585	PK – 5 600 studs. LI: 97%	243	\$560,400	\$ 934 \$ 3.84	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Daily tutoring ✓ Enrichment (both partner staff and school faculty as instructors) ✓ Weekly professional development
Elmhurst Community Prep (ECP) Oakland, CA \$10,583	6 – 8 350 studs. LI: 90%	432	\$711,000	\$ 2,031 \$ 4.70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Daily intervention blocks ✓ Partner-run enrichment programming ✓ Weekly professional development
Orchard Gardens Pilot School (OGPS) Boston, MA \$16,902	PK – 8 833 studs. LI: 73%	K – 5: 180 6 – 8: 540	K – 5: \$559,376 6 – 8: \$405,068	K – 5: \$ 942 \$ 5.23 6 – 8: \$ 1,695 \$ 3.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Additional class time (K – 8) ✓ Academic support (6 – 8) ✓ Partner-run enrichment/apprenticeships (6 – 8) ✓ Weekly professional development

Suggested State Actions

Identify funding opportunities for schools to implement extended year schedules.

States have implemented several strategies to fund innovative school schedules. For example, Arizona raised property taxes to support extended time schedules in school districts (Kaplan, Farbman, Deich, & Padgett, 2014). Massachusetts allocated \$14 million in grant funds to school districts to support planning and implementation of extended learning time (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017). New York allocated \$20 million in grant funds to school districts to implement extended learning time and \$10,000 to plan for implementation (New York State Education Department, 2017).

Maryland currently uses federal funds from Title I and School Improvement Grants (SIG) to support the implementation of innovative school schedules. However, this funding is limited to schools that meet criteria for Title I and SIG funding. Recent legislation, House Bill 1402, directs the Governor to include \$7.5 million in the state budget to support implementation of extended school day and/or summer enrichment programs. However, there are restrictions on which public schools would qualify for funds. Also, grant funds are not a sustainable funding source to maintain the implementation of innovative school schedules. Funding sources must be identified to drive long term change and not short term solutions. As a result, the state should identify additional funding opportunities for school systems to plan, implement, and sustain innovative school schedules.

Recommendation 3: Provide leadership, guidance, and technical assistance to local school system leaders on the implementation of innovative school schedules.**Rationale**

Innovative school schedules are most impactful when they are implemented as part of a comprehensive school improvement strategy (McMurrer, Frizzell, & Yoshioka, 2015). A strategic and coordinated approach is needed to ensure that innovative schedules align with school improvement goals and are implemented with a high-level of fidelity. Providing leadership at the state level can help school systems streamline school reform efforts and overcome challenges to implementing innovative schedules.

Suggested State Actions**Dedicate personnel to coordinate, monitor, support, and assess the implementation and effectiveness of innovative school schedules.**

The implementation of innovative schedules in Maryland is currently led by local school system leaders. According to Executive Order 01.01.2016.13, low-performing, at-risk, and charter schools need to apply for a waiver to implement an innovative school schedule. Schools that implement innovative schedules using Title I or SIG funding must adhere to criteria identified by those funding sources. Beyond applying for a waiver and Title I and SIG funding criteria, there are no additional guidelines or supports provided by the state for schools to implement innovative schedules. MSDE must take the lead to build the capacity of local school systems in the implementation and monitoring of innovative schedules. As a result, it is recommended that MSDE develop resources to share effective practices and lessons learned. Additionally, MSDE should designate personnel to provide guidance and support to school system leaders on the implementation of innovative school schedules.

Recommendation 4: Define metrics and an accountability structure to assess effectiveness of strategies implemented as part of an innovative schedule.

Rationale

Clearly defined metrics must be established to assess the effectiveness of strategies implemented as part of innovative schedules. Researchers have attempted to draw connections between instructional time and student achievement. The results of the research suggest that how time is spent is a strong contributing factor for student achievement (Kidron & Lindsay, 2014) (Baker, Fabrega, Galindo, & Mishook, 2004). As a result, data should be collected on how time is spent when implementing innovative school schedules. The National Center on Time and Learning recommends collecting operational and instructional time data from schools to monitor ways in which school time is used (Farbman, Davis, Goldberg, & Rowland, 2015).

Challenges

There are a number of variables that contribute to student achievement. Time alone is not a sufficient indicator of academic success. Additionally, it is difficult to equate student achievement to a single reform effort.

Suggested State Actions

Identify data to collect and an accountability structure.

It is recommended that MSDE define metrics for assessing effectiveness of strategies implemented as part of an innovative school schedule and collect data from school systems on identified metrics. Collected data can be shared and used to make informed decisions regarding how to use additional time to enhance student achievement.

Recommendation 5: Include a significant amount of high-quality structured time beyond the traditional school schedule.**Rationale**

A significant amount of time must be included in the school schedule to impact academic achievement. Research suggests that adding 25% or more instructional time beyond the traditional school calendar (approximately 300 hours) coupled with data-driven instruction, frequent teacher feedback, tutoring, and high academic expectations had the greatest impact on academic outcomes (Dobbie & Roland, 2011). Most schools that implement additional time include a minimum of 200 – 300 hours beyond state required time (Kaplan, Chan, Seidel, & Zorich, 2011).

The average length of the school day in Maryland is approximately 6.5 to 7 hours. As a result, the addition of 200 hours would require schools that extend the school year to add approximately 31 days to the school calendar.

Challenges

Current calendar regulations in Maryland only allow for low-performing, at-risk, or charter schools that have waivers to open for pupil attendance prior to Labor Day and/or end after June 15. Schools that do not have waivers would not be allowed to extend the school year. Additionally, adding days to the school calendar would require additional funding to support salaries, benefits, facilities, supplies, materials, and transportation.

Suggested State Actions**Define at-risk schools.**

Currently, there is no definition of “at-risk” schools in Maryland. As a result, it is unclear which schools would qualify for a waiver of the requirements to begin the school year after Labor Day and end the school year by June 15 using the “at-risk” designation.

Provide funding for schools to implement innovative schedules.

Suggested state actions for funding were identified in recommendation two of this document.

Recommendation 6: Focus innovative schedules on advancing academic studies in core content areas, enrichment opportunities, and health services for students.

Rationale

Time alone is not sufficient to improve student academic achievement. The quality of how time is spent is an essential factor for improving student performance. As a result, it is recommended that innovative schedules focus on the following areas:

- Core Content Areas – provide the opportunity for students to advance their studies in mathematics, English Language Arts, social studies, and science.
- Enrichment Opportunities – provide the opportunity for students to extend their knowledge of the arts; participate in internships or apprenticeships; or engage in project-based learning experiences (robotics, computer programming, etc.).
- Health Services – provide the opportunity for students to participate in services related to fostering healthy physical and mental well-being.

Suggested State Actions

Provide resources and technical assistance to school systems to implement high-quality experiences during innovative schedules.

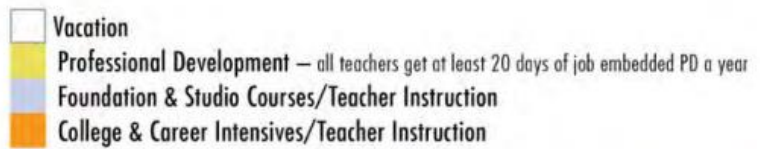
State actions for technical assistance and resources are addressed in recommendation three.

Recommendation 7: Provide time for educators to enhance their professional practice.

Rationale

High-performing schools with innovative schedules devote significantly more time to teacher development than schools with traditional schedules (Kaplan, Chan, Seidel, & Zorich, 2011). As a result, innovative schedules must provide educators with time to collaborate, analyze data, and engage in professional learning experiences. There are several different scheduling options that will allow for school system leaders to build in professional learning during the school day. For example, Generation Schools implement staggered teacher schedules that allow teachers to have up to twenty days of professional development per school year. They are able to accomplish this by having two teams of teachers, with one team rotating through each grade level allowing another team to engage in professional learning experiences. The first team of teachers facilitates Foundation and Studio Courses, which are core content area and elective courses. The second team of teachers facilitates College and Career Intensive Courses, which provide students with real-world learning experiences to prepare them to pursue post-secondary study. The figure below depicts the typical schedule for teachers in Generation Schools (Generation Schools Network).

ANNUAL SCHEDULE



STUDENTS: 200 School days

Grade	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
9th	Full School Vacation											
10th												
11th												
12th												

TEACHERS: 180 School days

Role	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
9th grade	Full School Vacation											
10th grade												
11th grade												
12th grade												
Intensives												

- Teachers have a one-month vacation in July. They also have two separate 4-week breaks throughout the school year, consisting of three weeks of vacation and one week of team planning and PD.
- A side agreement with the United Federation of Teachers in New York and an Innovation Plan in Colorado allow for this schedule.

Challenges

Scheduling time during the school day for collaborative and independent professional learning experiences can be difficult.

Suggested State Actions

Provide professional learning opportunities and resources on innovative approaches to staffing and scheduling to school system leaders.

MSDE should share examples of innovative schedules that will allow educators to engage in collaborative planning and other professional learning experiences during the school day. MSDE must also provide leadership and technical assistance to school systems that implement innovative schedules.

Recommendation 8: Utilize certificated educators to facilitate academic instruction when implementing additional time in core content areas.

Rationale

Research suggests that increased learning time programs that utilized certificated educators had a statically significant positive effect on students' literacy and math achievement compared to programs that utilized educators that were not certified (volunteers, graduate students, etc.) (Kidron & Lindsay, 2014). As a result, it is recommended that certificated educators are used to facilitate instruction in core content areas when implementing innovative schedules.

Challenges

There is a shortage of certified educators in high-need areas like mathematics and world language. Additionally, overuse of core content educators can lead to teacher fatigue and high turnover rates.

Suggested State Actions

Identify alternative certification and training opportunities to expand the pool of qualified educators, especially in high-need areas.

Certification is the process to verify that each educator has the qualifications and training to execute his/her professional duties. There are several options to earn a teaching certificate in Maryland. However, the certification process and requirements can be one potential barrier to attracting promising educators to the profession. A balance must be established to maintain Maryland's high standards while increasing the pool of quality teacher candidates. MSDE is currently convening stakeholders to explore alternative certification pathways.

Recommendation 9: Include digital learning as an option to engage students in learning experiences as a part of innovative school schedules.Rationale

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has established laws and regulations, [Education Article § 7–1002](#) and [Code of Maryland Regulation 13A.04.15](#), which outline criteria for local school systems to offer online and blended courses. Several school systems currently offer the opportunity for students to participate in digital learning both inside and outside of the school building. In order to build human capacity within school systems to facilitate student online courses, MSDE offers a credit bearing facilitation course for educators. Throughout the state, over 100 educators have been approved to facilitate student online courses.

MSDE has dedicated staff in the Office of Instructional Technology to provide guidance and technical assistance to school systems in offering digital learning experiences to their students. Local school system leaders can build on the foundation established for digital learning to provide opportunities for students to engage in flexible and personalized learning during extended learning time.

Challenges

Equity and access must be considered as digital learning experiences are expanded. Students must have access to the appropriate resources that will allow them to fully engage in digital learning both in and out of the school building. Additionally, online learning programs and resources must meet accessibility guidelines to ensure content is accessible to diverse learners.

Suggested State Actions**Continue to support school systems in the identification and implementation of digital learning experiences for students.**

Online courses: MSDE currently offers over 200 online credit-bearing courses for students. MSDE should continue to review, accept, and add new student online courses to the approved list.

Accessibility: MSDE should continue to staff an accessibility specialist who works to ensure online courses comply with accessibility guidelines.

Blended learning: MSDE should

- Develop and populate a state repository to house vetted digital teaching and learning resources as well as provide educator access to digital resources from other states.
- Develop and conduct workshops for each school system on evaluating and integrating digital resources into teaching and learning.

Additional information about online learning in Maryland may be found on the following webpage:
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/ITSLM/DigitalLearning/index.aspx>

Recommendation 10: Include opportunities for community partners and institutions of higher education to engage students in enrichment opportunities and health services.Rationale

Improving student performance depends on a variety of stakeholders working together towards a common goal. Collaboration among schools, communities, and institutions of higher education can expand the pool of resources, expertise, and individuals available to engage students in enrichment experiences. Additional time can be used to integrate services from partners to foster student success and overall well-being. For example, schools have used additional time to provide mental and physical health services to students (Center for American Progress, 2010). Schools have also used additional time to prepare students for careers and post-secondary opportunities. For example, Gilliam Collegiate Academy in Texas adds 60 minutes to the school day. This additional time is used for dual enrollment opportunities for students. As a result of the additional time, students are provided the opportunity to graduate from high school with an associate's degree (Kaplan, Chan, Seidel, & Zorich, 2011).

Challenges

A major barrier to community partnership is finding qualified partners with vetted resources and properly trained individuals to engage students in enrichment experiences.

Suggested State Actions**Establish criteria and a vetting process for school partners.**

Partnerships require extensive planning, assessment, and revision to ensure services provided are in alignment with curricular requirements and school improvement goals. As a result, quality control measures should be established to assist local school system leaders in identifying community partners with vetted and aligned resources. Additionally, training and background checks should be required for any volunteer working with students.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. Extend the school year instead of extending the school day or week.**
- 2. Provide funding for school systems to plan, pilot, implement, and sustain innovative schedules.**
- 3. Provide leadership, guidance, and technical assistance to local school system leaders on the implementation of innovative school schedules.**
- 4. Define metrics and an accountability structure to assess effectiveness of strategies implemented as part of innovative schedules.**
- 5. Include a significant amount of high-quality, structured time beyond the traditional school schedule.**
- 6. Focus innovative schedules on advancing academic studies in core content areas, enrichment opportunities, and health services for students.**
- 7. Provide time for educators to enhance their professional practice.**
- 8. Utilize certificated educators to facilitate academic instruction when implementing additional time in core content areas.**
- 9. Include digital learning as an option to engage students in learning experiences as a part of innovative school schedules.**
- 10. Include opportunities for community partners and institutions of higher education to engage students in enrichment opportunities and health services.**

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