SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS
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Introduction

Though current policy debates on school reform and improvement focus primarily on academic standards, a broader focus on supporting student success is necessary to give all students an equal chance to succeed. This is particularly important for schools serving students living in poverty, a disproportionate number of whom are also students of color. The impact of poverty on student achievement has been well-documented. However, this is not an insurmountable problem. Research on high-performing schools serving children who are socioeconomically disadvantaged finds that these schools take direct action to support student success and proactively address barriers to student achievement.

Student support programs in the form of counseling services, enrichment programs, and drug prevention programs have existed in schools for decades. However, the most effective programs address the overall school environment and provide supports to all students, with an emphasis on building student strengths and preventing problems before they begin. This paper will discuss how to set up or organize schools that support student success via these three interrelated areas:

- a safe and positive school environment
- social and emotional learning
- school-based after-school programs, extended learning time and summer learning

Well-designed interventions and programs in these areas have demonstrated effectiveness in improving student outcomes.

A Safe and Positive School Environment

Student academic success must begin with a “physically and emotionally safe” environment in which students can learn. Experts refer to this as a positive school climate, which the National School Climate Center (NSCC) describes as the “patterns of school life experiences and [that]reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures.” The center concludes that “A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, and satisfying life in a democratic society.” Research has identified a strong relationship between a negative school climate and the academic and discipline problems that are all too prevalent in schools serving disadvantaged students. Thus, it is imperative that schools and districts with a high percentage of disadvantaged students take action to create positive school climates. While there are different programs implemented by schools to support a safe school environment, positive
behavior systems which are explained below are a holistic approach to create a positive school climate.

Schools have pursued a variety of policies to improve school climate, including positive behavior systems, anti-bullying policies, and conflict management systems. Current policies aimed at creating a positive school climate are proactive, in contrast to the reactive “zero-tolerance” policies that took hold in the '90s and often led to an increase in expulsions and suspensions, including for less-serious offenses—without commensurate improvements in school climate or academic outcomes for most schools. More-proactive policies are effective in creating a positive school climate that prevents negative outcomes such as low performance, lost instruction time, and the use of class time for non-academic efforts. The decision to implement a positive behavior system may stem from a variety of factors. For some schools it is a response to a negative school climate with discipline issues and lack of school cohesion, while for others it is the foundation for a positive school climate. Schools that are suffering from a negative climate may consider the implementation of a positive behavior system to set a foundation that can lead to a variety of gains, including improved academic outcomes.

**Positive behavior systems**

One of the most effective strategies for creating a positive climate is the implementation of a school-wide positive behavior system. Such systems promote increased trust among students and staff, reduce disciplinary offenses, and improve instruction. Positive behavior systems can have different components, but most include three layers of prevention strategies: one implemented school-wide, a second targeted to at-risk students, and a third for the highest-risk students in the school. The Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, which works with the U.S. Department of Education and technical assistance centers across the country, identified the following necessary components of an effective school-wide system:

- developing and implementing scientifically-based behavior and academic interventions and supports
- making data-driven decisions
- creating an environment that prevents problem behavior
- teaching and encouraging pro-social skills and behaviors (behaviors that benefit others or the entire community, such as sharing and helping)
- continuous review of student performance and progress

Positive behavior systems create a space where the escalation of disciplinary issues can be prevented and an environment that emphasizes collaboration among all students and staff. Each school’s system will look different and should be tailored to the needs of its students.
**Effectiveness of positive behavior systems**

Positive behavior systems reduce discipline referrals in two ways. First, they improve school climate, which leads to reductions in the number of students engaging in negative behaviors. Second, they improve staff members’ ability to handle situations that could otherwise escalate to a discipline infraction. The effectiveness of positive behavior systems is usually measured through disciplinary metrics, such as the number of referrals and suspensions, particularly in schools that have adopted behavior systems in response to discipline problems. Another study found that the implementation of a positive behavior system, particularly a systemic use of praise and reinforcement by staff, was correlated with lower expulsions. Positive behavior systems implemented with fidelity statewide in Illinois schools resulted in decreases in the number of students receiving referrals over time, improved reading scores on the state assessment and improved math scores on the third, fifth and eighth grade state assessments. Students in schools that have implemented positive behavior systems indicated they have greater trust in school personnel. Teachers who were trained to specifically encourage students more had more positive interactions than negative interactions and created closer ties with students. General student and staff behaviors shifted because the climate is one of respect, communication, and problem solving; as opposed to a “gotcha mentality” that assumes the worst in students and staff.

Positive behavior systems may be particularly useful for schools with high numbers of African-American and Latino students, who are typically overrepresented in school discipline cases. Students of color receive disciplinary citations two to three times more often than other students. Research documents reductions in referrals and suspensions following the adoption of positive behavior systems in urban districts serving a majority of low-income students of color. Research on positive behavior systems in urban schools is limited, however. Many of the lessons from schools implementing such systems are likely applicable to urban schools, but more research on effective implementation strategies in urban school settings is needed.

**Best practices of positive behavior systems**

Several key conditions can help support effective implementation of positive behavior systems. Schools start with a shared belief that they need to be an environment in which all children thrive. Therefore, each school must focus on creating and encouraging community, respect and care among all members of the school. The faculty that successfully implements behavior systems clearly outlines values and expectations to staff and students alike. Staff buy-in and leadership are also critical for success, and can be facilitated by engaging staff in identifying the key messages and outcomes the school will work toward by implementing the positive behavior system. Staff must also have training to implement the system and create a consistent message throughout the school. Once students and staff understand and internalize the messages, values, and goals of the school and the positive behavior system, specific strategies can then be implemented to handle issues among students.
Positive behavior systems often involve students in active roles, including practicing conflict resolution and acting as peer mediators. All members of the school community have a role to play in building school climate: Teachers and lead students must model positive behaviors and values. Some schools establish a leadership team—comprised of staff members representing diverse roles throughout the school—to lead the positive behavior system implementation by identifying the needs of the campus and the messages that have to established, defining tactics to deal with those issues, and continually reassessing implementation.

**Whom can we learn from?**

**North Carolina** has set a goal of implementing positive behavior systems statewide. The state provides training, professional development, technical assistance, and evaluation assistance to all schools as needed. The state requires that participating schools use evaluation tools to identify areas of success and challenges for themselves as they implement positive behavior systems. Such tools include a School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), which is used to assess and evaluate the implementation of positive behavior systems; and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Surveys, a web-based progress monitoring system. School teams use the data collected from these evaluation tools to create action plans. Some of the most common strategies used by schools once they identify their needs include academic interventions, such as tutoring, small-group instruction, and culturally responsive practices; and behavior interventions, such as social skill instruction and school-wide rules and procedures. Rates of school suspension have consistently declined in schools implementing positive behavior interventions.

**Maryland** also has implemented positive behavior systems statewide and provided training for a team from each school. The teams were then responsible for leading and training staff and establishing expectations and strategies at their schools in positive behavior systems. In addition, Maryland’s Department of Education hired state-level trainers and coaches to facilitate the proper implementation of positive behavior systems. Building this capacity at the state level has ensured schools resources for both support and training as necessary. Materials are available for staff and an annual summer institute provides time for leadership teams to come together and review data and research as well as work on their implementation plans annually. Maryland’s system is being studied by the Institute of Education Science (IES) and preliminary findings show good implementation of positive behavior systems in many participating schools as well as a reduction in student suspensions.

**The National Study of Charter Management Organization Effectiveness** reviewed 22 CMOs and reported that 95 percent of those included in the study implemented behavior policies that include positive beliefs and values as well as an emphasis on positive respectful relationships.
between the students and the adults in the school. Adoption of such systems was correlated with CMOs that produced positive outcomes for students.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to children’s development of fundamental social and emotional competencies in five primary skill areas:

- **self-awareness**: awareness of own emotions, values, strengths, and limitations
- **self-management**: management of emotions and behaviors in order to achieve goals
- **social awareness**: understanding of and empathy for others
- **relationship skills**: development of positive relationships, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills
- **responsible decision-making**: ability to make ethical and productive choices regarding personal and social behavior

These skills are critical to students’ development as young people who are academically, socially, and personally successful. SEL programs aim to provide children with opportunities for learning, practicing, and applying these skills both in and out of the classroom throughout the span of their education. This is particularly important for students growing up in poverty, who are more likely to experience greater life stressors such as food insecurity, exposure to community violence, and lack of social support.

Supporting students’ social and emotional development requires both a safe and positive school environment and opportunities for learning and practicing social and emotional competencies. Thus, there is overlap between positive behavior systems and SEL programs. In practice, an effective SEL program explicitly teaches the key social and emotional competencies via classroom-based instruction, and then provides ongoing opportunities for practice and reinforcement both in and out of the classroom. For example, SEL lessons focused on specific conflict resolution skills may be taught in the classroom, while a school-wide conflict resolution program supported by all staff members provides opportunities for students to apply their knowledge. As such, an SEL program is not simply a separate program that can be added on to an existing school environment. Rather, SEL “is a way of teaching and organizing classrooms and schools that helps children learn a set of skills needed to successfully manage life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, communicating effectively, being sensitive to others’ needs, and getting along with others.”

SEL programs create safe, caring, well-managed, and participatory learning environments and provide instruction in social and emotional competencies. This increases student attachment to
school, reduces students’ involvement in risky behaviors such as substance use and truancy, enhances the development of protective factors such as motivation to learn and high self-esteem, and promotes positive youth development—ultimately leading to improved academic performance, as well as positive outcomes in both school and life.\textsuperscript{37}

**Effectiveness of social and emotional learning programs**

Social and emotional health has been linked to academic outcomes for students across numerous studies.\textsuperscript{38} In a longitudinal study of 576 students in Washington state, better social, emotional, and decision-making skills predicted higher grades and test scores in high school, even after controlling for prior performance on standardized tests and demographic variables. Attention regulation and commitment to school, as measured by teachers, also predicted academic achievement. Children’s reporting of having bonded to school of bonding to school predicted higher grades, while depression predicted lower grades.\textsuperscript{39}

Research on SEL programs finds them to be effective overall and supports their impact on key domains of student success: academic achievement, behavior management, mental health and well-being, and school engagement and attendance.\textsuperscript{40} In a review of academic achievement outcomes across its Model programs addressing risks and protective factors for youth, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)\textsuperscript{41} found 12 programs that produced positive academic outcomes, including: improved grades, graduation rates, and standardized test scores; higher rates of grade promotion; improved reading, writing, and math skills; and increased child developmental levels for very young children. These programs also demonstrated improvements in other school performance outcomes, such as a reduction in special education referrals, school behavioral incidents, and out-of-school suspensions; increased parental involvement; decreased absenteeism; and greater participation in after-school and learning activities. All 12 programs were comprehensive and most involved the school and family.

Though schools often implement student support programs aimed at addressing one type of behavior (e.g., substance abuse) or a specific “at-risk” population (e.g., students with truancy records),\textsuperscript{42} the most effective types of SEL programs are comprehensive programs aimed at all students. A meta-analysis of 165 school-based prevention programs\textsuperscript{43} found that, overall, these programs were effective in improving attendance as well as reducing alcohol and drug use and other conduct problems, but that comprehensive programs and programs that addressed the whole school environment were more effective than isolated efforts and individually focused interventions. A more recent meta-analysis that only included studies of universal SEL programs (i.e., programs implemented for all students in a school rather than for specific groups) found an impressive 11-percentile gain in academic achievement for students across 213 studies.\textsuperscript{44} Students also demonstrated significant improvements in SEL skills, attitudes, and positive social
behavior and decreases in conduct problems and emotional distress. Analysis of the studies that collected follow-up data at least six months later found that gains in these areas were maintained.

Best practices in social and emotional learning programs

Effective SEL programs are coordinated approaches guided by a clear conceptual framework. They focus on building caring school environments in which children experience supportive relationships and develop social and emotional competencies, all of which provide the foundation for meaningful learning. Short-term, isolated approaches that are primarily didactic in nature are not as effective as long-term programs (i.e., those taking place across multiple school years) that are coordinated across multiple domains. The most effective programs follow four recommended practices, described by the acronym SAFE:

- **sequenced**: A connected and coordinated set of activities
- **active**: Use of active forms of learning
- **focused**: At least one component dedicated to personal and social skills
- **explicit**: Targets specific SEL skills rather than general development

Selection of an evidence-based, comprehensive program is not enough, however. Quality programs must provide equal attention to program design, program coordination, educator preparation and support, and program evaluation. Educators must develop a consistent plan and structure for implementation. Tools for monitoring implementation and using data to improve program delivery are also important elements of the program design. SEL goals should be aligned with school, district, and state policies, and stakeholders at multiple levels should be involved in program planning. SEL programs and activities must be coordinated school-wide and integrate activities beyond the classroom in collaboration with the family and community. Programs that provide both an individual and an environmental focus and that involve families and communities as active partners offer the most opportunity for students to generalize skills to their daily lives and to reinforce SEL principles.

Research shows that programs conducted by teachers and other school personnel are more effective than those conducted by non-school personnel. Effective implementation of SEL programs does add to the existing responsibilities of school personnel. Educator preparation and support is critical in order to ensure that programs are implemented effectively and that educators are invested in them. Training should not be limited to the start of a program, but should include ongoing technical assistance, opportunities for observation and coaching, and efforts to promote program acceptance. Adequate time and resources are also essential for programs to avoid overburdening staff. Finally, comprehensive program evaluation is necessary to ensure accountability, measure program effects, and uncover areas for improvement.
Though there is research indicating that the benefits of SEL programs outweigh their costs, the research in this area is limited and costs vary dramatically. In a Washington state cost-benefit analysis, the Seattle Social Development Project was estimated to cost $4,590 per student and provide $14,426 in benefits, while the Child Development Project a national school based program was estimated to cost $16 per student and provide $448 in benefits. This wide range may reflect the difference between programs that use existing school personnel and those that hire additional support staff to provide the program. However, the lower cost of a program using existing personnel may be misleading, as those personnel are presumably using time for the program that would otherwise be used for other activities. Further research in this area is needed, particularly given the complexity of estimating costs for programs that are implemented primarily by existing personnel.

Future policy efforts toward the integration of SEL programs into public education should begin with the development of educational standards and benchmarks for SEL in pre-K through 12th grade. All but two states have SEL standards for pre-K education, and some states have expanded SEL standards to elementary education. However, only Illinois has enacted free-standing and comprehensive statewide SEL standards for grades pre-K through 12th grade. Development of standards would ensure a common language within states about what SEL knowledge and skills should be addressed at what grade level, but would still allow districts the freedom to choose the particular evidence-based SEL programs and approaches that are the best match for their needs.

**Whom can we learn from?**

**Illinois** is the first state to adopt a comprehensive, free-standing set of standards for integrating SEL into educational systems for pre-K through 12th. Guided by a statewide Children’s Mental Health Task Force composed of representatives from more than 100 organizations, the Illinois legislature passed the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Act of 2003 (Public Act 93-0495). This legislation included a mandate for the Illinois State Board of Education (SBE) to develop SEL standards and for local school districts to establish policies to guide SEL implementation. In developing the SEL standards, the Illinois SBE selected three goals: develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success; use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; and demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. In the initial phase, 75 schools were provided grants for a three-year implementation process. A two-year case study of 21 of the schools found that staff was supportive of the SEL program. Teachers reported improvements in school climate and student behavior; for example, one staff member described a 75 percent decline in office referrals.
Louisville CARE (Creating a Respectful Environment) for Kids is a comprehensive program implemented in the Jefferson County, Kentucky, school district. This diverse urban school district serves approximately 100,000 students, and the program has been implemented in all elementary schools and sixth- and seventh grade classrooms, with plans to expand to eighth grade. Interventions include daily greeting of all students by a team of teachers, followed by a morning meeting in which social-emotional skills are developed and practiced. Teachers and staff reinforce social-emotional skills throughout the school day. As the program is implemented, schools add school-wide community-building events, cross-grade buddy activities, and parent-engagement activities. In the 2007-2008 school year, schools that had implemented the program showed greater improvement in both student and teacher attendance than schools that had not implemented the program. In an evaluation of elementary schools that had implemented the program in the 2008-2009 school year, schools that had a high implementation level (defined as the amount of program elements incorporated into the school day throughout the year) had a higher percentage of students scoring as “Proficient” or “Distinguished” in state reading and math tests, and higher test scores overall on reading, math, science, and social studies (a comparison to schools that did not implement the program was not reported). In a 2009 survey of fourth and fifth-grade students on school climate, students at CARE for Kids schools reported a greater sense of support and community at school and increased motivation to attend school. Eighty percent of teachers reported feeling that the program improved the social and emotional development of their students and led to a more positive school climate.

School-Based After-School Programs, Extended Learning Time, and Summer Learning

Supports for student academic success often include additional time for students to learn, through extended learning time in schools or expanded access to after-school programs operated by schools or community-based groups. Such strategies are particularly important for disadvantaged students, who are more likely to have limited out-of-school activities in which to participate. Strategies that extend learning time by lengthening the school year may also help reduce academic loss experienced by disadvantaged students during the summer months.

Over the past two decades, significant policy activity has focused on after-school programs as a strategy to offer positive alternatives for students who would otherwise be unsupervised and as a way to provide increased time for academic learning and enrichment activities. Federal funding via the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) is available to all states and has grown since its inception to an annual allotment of $1.166 billion. Nearly half of all public schools now offer school-based after-school programs in varying formats, funded by multiple sources. Schools may choose to offer after-school programs to: provide alternatives for unsupervised hours; assist students with homework and provide tutoring services; and expose
students to activities that are usually not available during the day, including recreational and arts activities.

More recently, policy efforts have emphasized extended learning time. Many charter schools and charter school networks offer an extended school day, and the U.S. Department of Education included extended learning time as a required element for persistently low-achieving schools implementing the “transformation” model to improve student achievement.66 Advocates of extended learning time note that while expectations for students have grown significantly in the last few decades, time spent in the classroom has remained unchanged for most students. A longer school day, week, or year can give schools the opportunity to restructure learning time to keep up with increased expectations and narrow or close achievement gaps.67 The number of schools implementing extended learning initiatives is not readily available. Schools can offer extended learning time through a variety of structural arrangements, including longer days, weeks, and school years. Extended learning time can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

1) additional and in-depth focus on core academic areas
2) school schedules that include electives throughout the day
3) additional teacher planning and collaboration time
4) thoughtful reform to the school schedule to maximize learning time within the school hours
5) increased opportunities to engage students in activities that not just remediate but increase skills and provide advanced enrichment activities for academic progress.68

Alongside extended time initiatives, policies have considered the use of summer learning to further address the achievement gap. Since the earlier part of the century, research has confirmed the summer learning loss that occurs for students due to the continued use of an academic calendar established for a once predominantly agrarian society. Some studies estimate the loss to equal at least one month of learning,69 while others have measured summer loss to outpace academic gains for a whole school year.70 Regardless of the measure of the loss, it is clearly present; and the greatest loss has been measured among disadvantaged minority students, although some studies have also indicated a plateau of learning among middle-class students.71 Math and reading are the particularly impacted areas among disadvantaged students, which can primarily be explained by a lack of practice of skills learned in math from year to year and a lack of reading during the summer months. Over the decades, summer programs have been established by school districts with a range of purposes including recreation, remediation for failed coursework, additional services for children with special needs and opportunities for additional coursework to potentially graduate early. A special report on summer programs found that, of the families surveyed, only 25 percent of children were enrolled in a summer program even though the majority of parents would want their students to be enrolled.72 While many districts have increased their availability of summer learning for students, many programs are
providing remedial coursework. Additionally, the lack of publicly funded programs often leaves low-income students, who are most likely to experience summer loss, without many chances to participate in summer learning opportunities.

After-school programs, extended learning time and summer learning can provide additional time and support that help students to succeed academically, as well as building social-emotional and other non-academic skills. Each type of program generally includes academic assistance for students, social and developmental programs, dropout-prevention programs, and enrichment programs. The key difference is that after-school programs and summer learning are supplemental, whereas extended learning time initiatives are shifting the entire structure of the school day.

**Effectiveness of school-based after-school programs, extended learning time and summer learning**

The after school-programs with the greatest impact for low-income students target both academic learning and personal development. An evaluation of programs operated by The After-School Corporation (TASC) for more than 50,000 students in New York City schools found gains in math achievement (but not in reading or English language arts) and improved attendance. An evaluation that focused on after-school programs for at-risk students found positive effects for math and reading achievement. Student surveys also find increased engagement in school and a positive attitude toward academics among students participating in after-school programs.

While program studies of varying depth have reported gains and positive results from after-school programs, several have also reported mixed results and raise questions about the effectiveness of after-school programs overall. The most recent national evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education found no impact on academic subject assessments and a negative effect on behavior measures among students participating in after-school programs. Some of the mixed results can be attributed to program implementation and data collection.

Besides the focus on academics, many after-school programs aim to provide a space for personal development by helping students interact positively, build up self-esteem, and often be exposed to recreational, cultural, and other enrichment activities that are likely not available in their lives outside of school. Impact in these areas can be more difficult to measure, but researchers have used survey data to gauge the valued added to students in some of these developmental areas. Students participating in TASC programs rated highly sense of community, academic self-esteem, and opportunities to grow. Researchers have also examined the relationship between after-school programs that target student personal development and the number of behavioral problems as an indicator of program success. Programs that examined student behaviors report a mix of positive and negative results with elementary and middle school students’ involvement in negative behaviors. Both the academic and developmental gains attributed to student
participation in after-school programs strengthen continued support of supplemental opportunities to target student needs; however, most programs are voluntary and are only able to provide support to the students who choose to participate.

There is less research on extended learning time initiatives. The nonprofit National Center on Time & Learning has compiled promising practices from schools that have implemented extending learning time initiatives and experienced subsequent gains in student achievement. Positive results reported by participating schools include: 1) increased “time on task,” 2) broader and deeper coverage of curriculum, 3) more opportunities for experiential learning, 4) greater ability to work with diverse ability levels simultaneously, and 5) deepened adult-child relationships. Schools can implement extended learning time initiatives through a variety of strategies, including longer core-class periods, additional math and English classes, professional development and planning time for staff, enrichment activities, tutoring and homework help, and community activities. Since extended learning time can be implemented differently by each school, the results will also vary. While research on the effectiveness of extended learning time initiatives is still limited, reports from schools working with extended learning time indicate that making the most of additional hours requires significant changes in how schools, teachers, and students use time and do their work. Additional time alone does not necessarily produce learning gains. Extended learning time must be carefully implemented and coordinated to lead to positive outcomes.

Research on the effectiveness of summer programs is still developing. A review of summer program evaluations found that programs focused on remediation and acceleration saw positive results among participating students. Another summer initiative saw positive effects among African-American and Latino children who participated in a voluntary program that had students reading eight books over the summer. Much more research is needed in order to recommend the most effective use of summer school or programs to mitigate summer learning loss, especially among disadvantaged students. Many programs have not been evaluated and the differing purposes of the programs often challenge evaluation designs.

After-school programs, extended learning time and summer learning initiatives can entail significant costs. Personnel costs—whether for additional staff or additional hours worked by existing teachers—are typically the largest cost involved in these initiatives, which often also entail facilities and materials costs. One study of “high-quality” after-school programs in large urban cities found that such programs typically cost $4,320 per school year for each elementary or middle school student and $4,580 annually per high school student. More-specialized activities may entail higher costs. After-school programs typically combine funding from a mix of public funds (from federal, state, and local sources), private funds, parent fees, and some in-kind contributions. Researchers estimate that the cost to extend the school day by core teaching staff working 30 percent more annually will cost about $720 per student per year.
Most schools that implement extended learning time use a combination of salary add-ons, stipends, contractors, and even volunteers to staff the extended time. Schools can be creative in directing funds, organizing staff schedules, establishing staff contracts, and collaborating with local partners to make the shift necessary to extend the school day, week, or year. But regardless of the specific strategies used, after-school programs and extended learning time initiatives require a programmatic and fiscal commitment from districts. Because these programs are costly, districts must ensure that they are well-implemented, to maximize return on public investments (which may ultimately produce benefits exceeding the cost), and should also consider targeting after school and extended learning time resources to the neediest students. Specific costs for summer learning programs were not readily available but require a similar prioritization and investment from school districts.

**Whom can we learn from?**

In 2005 Massachusetts initiated the first state-level expanded learning time initiative. Massachusetts 2020, a nonprofit, provided grant funding to enable schools to plan for an additional 300 hours of instruction a year. After five years, 19 Massachusetts traditional and charter schools started implementing expanded learning time with over 10,500 predominantly low-income students. Students involved in the first year of the initiative made proficiency gains in ELA, math, and science. Each school organizes its use of extended day differently to include extra time for strengthening core academic areas, planning time for teachers, arts and music enrichment, and one-on-one instruction with at-risk students. The initiative is bold but does present a challenge in cost to scale.

**Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP)** is a network of high-performing charter schools that has included extended learning time in its school design since its inception. One of KIPP’s pillars is “More Time” dedicated to preparing students to be competitive and college ready. Schools have a longer school day of approximately 9.5 hours, offer Saturday school, and an extended school year during the summer months. The extended time allows for much of the elements encouraged, including longer periods for core subjects, enrichment classes, planning time for teachers, homework and tutoring time, and one-on-one instruction for students. Positive gains at KIPP schools are often attributed to the extended learning time.

**LA’s BEST** is a nonprofit that has provided after-school services to the Los Angeles United School District since 1988 and currently serves approximately 28,000 predominantly low-income, Hispanic, and African-American elementary students (up to the sixth grade). The program meets daily and is free to all students. LA’s BEST has a curriculum aimed at the whole child “that cultivates the development of students’ intellectual, social, and emotional well-beings so that they can achieve their full potential.” Activities focus on literacy, math, science, seasonal sports, arts and crafts and health and fitness. The program is funded through a combination of
philanthropic grants and school district funding. A study of LA’s BEST found gains in math and reading scores on state assessments as well as lower felony offenses for its participating students.96

The Young Scholars Program in North Carolina provides low-income elementary and middle school students a safe space to go after school and seeks to boost their academic performance.97 Students are invited to participate in the program and graduate once they reach high enough academic levels. Students participate in project-based activities after school and have organized homework help and tutoring every day after school.98 The program has a foundation partner and utilizes paid staff, parents, and other volunteers to provide as much support as possible. Young Scholars participants have made gains on the state tests as well as improved their attendance and promotion rates.99

After-school programs cannot provide every child all the resources they do not have access to either from their families or communities, but can be a valued resource for improving learning outcomes for disadvantaged children. Research has found evidence of positive academic, behavioral, and developmental outcomes for participants. Extending learning time initiatives have shown some positive initial results and merit additional attention given their potential, particularly for low-performing students who can benefit from the extended time to improve achievement and to ensure the best use of the school day, week and year. After-school programs are a normal offering at most schools, and many schools have integrated their costs into their annual budgets. Extended learning time, on the other hand, requires a restructuring of school budgets, possible changes to teacher contracts, partnerships with community members, and support from parents.

Conclusion

All children have academic, personal, and developmental needs that must be addressed to enable them to succeed in and out of school. While the main purpose of a school is to provide academic enrichment, the reality is that some children need much more in order to be prepared for success in college, careers, and life. Strategies that implement positive behavior systems, support social and emotional learning, and extend learning time can address critical student needs, and there are models with demonstrated effectiveness. An individual program may not be necessary or effective in all schools, so school and district leaders must carefully consider their students’ needs and identify the programs that best address those needs. Given the overlap between these three strategies, and the demonstrated effectiveness of comprehensive programs over fragmented efforts, schools may incorporate aspects of each of them into an overall school system. Effective implementation and program evaluation are also critical to both ensure that students are appropriately served and that investments are well used.
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ABOUT STAND FOR CHILDREN LEADERSHIP CENTER

Stand for Children Leadership Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides leadership development and training to everyday citizens. Our mission is to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, graduate from high school prepared for, and with access to, college and career training. To make that happen, we:

• Educate and empower parents, teachers, and community members to demand excellent public schools.

• Advocate for effective local, state and national education policies and investments.

• Ensure the policies and funding we advocate for reach classrooms and help students.

Learn more at www.stand.org