

ELT advocates want more funding flexibility

April 27, 2015

Key points:

- State and district rules can hamper funding access for expanded learning time
- Typical schools can access a maximum of \$250 per student for ELT
- Congress is debating federal policy to help enable ELT

ELT advocates want more funding flexibility

Without significant added funding, sustaining and scaling up expanded learning time across the country will require tradeoffs for schools and LEAs in the short term, according to ELT advocates.

"Key to sustaining ELT work across the country will be to figure out how to incorporate it into regular cost structures and regular funding streams," said Karen Hawley Miles, the executive director of [Education Resource Strategies](#), at the [Expanded Learning Summit](#) in Washington, D.C., on April 21. "That's going to require some very big shifts. It's not about adding this on top. It's about re-conceptualizing how we're doing everything and what the basic cost structures are and patterns of operating in schools are."

Miles was moderating a panel at the summit to discuss a new ERS report, [Putting the Pieces Together: Sustainable Funding for Expanded Time in Public Schools](#), which presents options that districts and schools could undertake to sustain ELT.

ELT typically lengthens the school day to provide more instruction for a defined group of students, for example all sixth-graders, or for all students in the school. Yet shifting funds to ELT can run into difficulties with district and state rules, such as class size maximums, that can hamper ELT sustainment, according to the report.

The shifting ELT landscape comes as Congress weighs whether to retain the [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) program in an ESEA reauthorization bill and whether to allow ELT programs to use 21st CCLC dollars.

The Senate's draft ESEA reauthorization bill, the Every Child Achieves Act, would do just that, while the House's version, the [Student Success Act](#), H.R. 5, proposes the elimination of 21st CCLC. In addition to 21st CCLC, ELT programs are able to access Title I and School Improvement Grant funding, but the rules for using such funding streams can be opaque to many LEAs.

Tenuous moment

While ELT has a good deal of momentum nationally, "it's also a tenuous moment for ELT," Miles said. "We've got the SIG funds declining. We have a lot of uncertainty around federal and state funding, and we have continued pressure on the cost structures in urban districts where costs continue to rise, pretty much automatically, to fund legacy structures that have existed since the Industrial Age, and we have all these new things that we want to do in our schools, as we're learning about what needs to happen and as we're trying to raise standards for all kids."

Such a situation puts a premium on figuring out funding alternatives for ELT, ERS suggests.

"Districts and schools need more flexibility in how they can use current funding streams," according to the ERS report. "As our analysis shows, many schools can repurpose a significant portion of the funds required for ELT, but only if they have flexibility to use these funds for purposes such as expanded learning time."

Such flexibilities will typically involve new state and district policies to permit position reductions, the elimination of across-the-board

class size maximums, more leeway in "instructor of record" policies to leverage paraprofessionals and resident teachers, and the use of partnerships with community service providers for ELT.

The report stems from a request by [Citizen Schools](#) that ERS look into how schools could repurpose existing funds to help sustain ELT. Citizen Schools is a Massachusetts-based nonprofit that helps staff ELT efforts in low-income middle schools in seven states with [AmeriCorps](#) educators and volunteers. "We want to see expanded learning time as the new normal for schools, especially during the middle school years," Citizen Schools CEO Steven Rothstein wrote in an email to *Education Daily*®.

Funding rules

To fund ELT requires about \$1,200 per student, but most schools will likely be only able to access funds for ELT of \$50 to \$250 per student at the school and central office level because of existing funding rules, according to the report, which examined six schools in four urban districts.

Despite the promise of repurposing funding for ELT, "in more than a decade of work with large urban districts, we've seen that very few of them tap into existing school- or district-level resources to fund this powerful improvement strategy," the report said.

In some schools and in some instances, "more time can mean less results," said David Liebowitz, the principal of [Browne Middle School](#) in Chelsea, Mass., during the panel to discuss the ERS report.

Liebowitz said that when he first became principal three years ago, Browne Middle School was in the last year of a state-funded ELT grant and that the school was using a "home grown" strategy for ELT by employing its teachers for an intervention and enrichment period after school. Requiring teachers to be at school for eight-and-a-half hours per day and to be in touch with parents during non-school hours was leading to teacher burnout and middling results and was "untenable," Liebowitz said.

"In my first year, I recognized we needed a different approach," he said.

Liebowitz reached out to Citizen Schools for help and was able to use that organization's staffers, as well as repurpose existing school funding for ELT, such as Title I, [Supplemental Educational Services](#), city funding and the elimination of a reading interventionist position that did not have the desired results, according to Liebowitz.

Other schools, however, may not enjoy the flexibilities that Liebowitz had. A "nimble" district budget office enabled the position reduction at Browne Middle School, and Liebowitz was not encumbered by a class size maximum requirement, he said -- a flexibility that allowed one music teacher to take 80 fifth- and sixth-graders after school hours, while other staffers spent the time tutoring ELT students in most need of academic help.

EducationDaily.com® related stories: [Advocates to present plan to expand 21st CCLC](#) (March 27, 2015); [Federal flexibility on ELT would help states, LEAs, researchers say](#) (March 13, 2015); [Use SIG changes to improve use of time](#) (Feb. 26, 2015); [Educators see benefits of expanded learning time](#) (Feb. 17, 2015)

--[Frank Wolfe](#) covers school funding for LRP Publications.

April 27, 2015

Reprinted with permission from: **Education Daily**®. © 2015 LRP Publications, 360 Hiatt Drive, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418. All rights reserved. For more information on this or other products published by LRP Publications, please call 1- 800-341-7874 or visit our website at: www.shoplrp.com.