A HANDBOOK FOR UNIONS AND DISTRICTS

IT'S ABOUT TIME

Lessons from Expanded Learning Time in Meriden, Conn.

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Lessons from Expanded Learning Time in Meriden, Conn.

This handbook was prepared by Mark Toner, an education writer and consultant, with support from the AFT Innovation Fund. October 2014

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Introduction

In Meriden, Conn., district leaders and teachers looked at the students arriving at their elementary schools and didn't see an achievement gap. They saw an opportunity gap.

A former manufacturing hub in Central Connecticut about 20 miles south of Hartford, the city of Meriden and its roughly 60,000 residents have struggled economically since the 1970s. The neighborhoods around the district's elementary schools facing some of the greatest needs lacked activities and support for children during the time after school. Seventy percent of the district's 9,100 students receive free or reduced-price lunches, nearly double the statewide average. One in eight is an English language learner, mostly of Hispanic descent. Many come from single-parent families or ones in which both parents work. So district and teacher union leaders began thinking about ways to provide enrichment for students and to give educators more time to collaborate on delivering instruction. For many of Meriden's students, "100 minutes at school is better than 100 minutes in the neighborhood," says Dan Coffey, principal of Casimir Pulaski Elementary School.

Research suggests that added time at school—when it amounts to at least 300 additional hours a year—is one of the two interventions that are the best predictors of improving education outcomes. (The other is intensive tutoring.) Expanded time, says Jennifer Davis, co-founder and president of the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) in Boston, allows educators to "focus on improving the life chances of our most vulnerable children."

But until recently, most schools that had implemented expanded learning time were charters. Could a public school district, working with its teachers union, successfully put such a model into place in traditional community schools? The AFT Innovation Fund—founded in 2009 by the president of the American Federation of Teachers to provide resources for unions to lead educational change—wanted to find out. While supportive of providing additional learning opportunities for students, the Innovation Fund was particularly interested in ELT as a way to make teaching more collaborative. The fund insisted that teachers should play a leading role in planning the ELT programs and that schedules should ensure teachers had more time to work together during the school day.

In 2011, the Innovation Fund invited a team of educators from Meriden to attend a meeting of the NCTL in Boston to learn more about the benefits of expanded learning time. Inspired by what they learned, the Meriden Federation of Teachers applied for an Innovation Fund grant to implement expanded time in its community elementary schools having the greatest need. The school district, noted for its strong labor-management partnership, also became an early member of a five-state initiative that will ultimately create expanded learning time in 40 schools nationwide. Along with nearly $450,000 (over

three years) from the AFT Innovation Fund, the work has been supported with federal and state dollars, as well as a grant from the Ford Foundation. "It was a perfect storm," says Erin Benham, president of the Meriden Federation of Teachers, an AFT affiliate.

In Connecticut, the expanded learning time initiative was touted as part of Gov. Dannel Malloy's education reform law, which included $100 million in new funding for the state's neediest schools. With the exception of universal pre-K, "the biggest bang for your buck, on a day-to-day basis, is an expanded day," Malloy said of his initiative. "We are literally adding weeks, 100 minutes at a time, to the school year."

In Meriden, the district and union had little time to plan, receiving notice they had been awarded the Innovation Fund grant to launch the program at Pulaski just months before the 2012-13 school year was to begin. District and union officials scrambled to alert parents, hold meetings and work with a broad range of school employees—including paraprofessionals, transportation, clerical, food services and nursing staff—to ensure they were ready for a longer school day. Schedules were created, and teachers tapped and given a stipend to provide enrichment during the expanded time. State and local partners, including the Meriden YMCA and Boys & Girls Club, were recruited to provide support and, in many cases, staff for the expanded day programs.

"We quickly realized we needed all hands on deck," says Benham.

When Pulaski opened its doors that fall, all students arrived at 7:30 a.m., received a free breakfast, and then participated in 90 minutes of enrichment, including an exercise period and rotating enrichment activities, before the standard school day began. Now, two years into the grant, expanded learning time has been implemented in two Meriden elementary schools—Pulaski and John Barry Elementary—and began in a third school, Roger Sherman Elementary, in fall 2014. Models have been refined at each school, whose planning teams continue to receive technical support as members of statewide collaboratives supported by NCTL.

Over the course of a year, students in Meriden's three ELT schools now receive 40 additional days of instructional time—above and beyond the district's traditional 180-day school year. It's difficult to attribute gains in student performance to any one program, but Meriden officials do point to state test results at Pulaski—whose third- and fourth-graders achieved the greatest reading growth in the district and outpaced district and state averages in math and reading—when communicating with parents and the community. Other signs of success touted by the district:

- Average daily attendance, arguably a more direct indicator of whether students and parents value the program, has improved to 98 percent—up more than 10 percent at Pulaski. Twenty classrooms in the two ELT schools recorded perfect attendance.
- Student survey results show that virtually all students think their teachers are "fair, caring, and motivate them to learn."
- Teachers feel a stronger sense of community in the expanded learning time schools, in part because the transitions between classrooms and enrichment activities have

given all staff the chance to interact with many more students. "You know everyone in your school, not just the kids in your class," says Michelle Lionello, a fifth-grade teacher at Barry Elementary.

"This is really about transforming schooling," says Meriden Superintendent Mark Benigni.

It's also about the strength of the ongoing collaboration between Meriden Public Schools and the Meriden Federation of Teachers, a partnership that has received attention at state and national levels. "Things are happening here because of the level of collaboration," Gov. Malloy said in his visit to the district. "To be able to do this on a cooperative basis with the teachers … is quite remarkable."

Two other Connecticut districts, Bridgeport and Windham, will launch expanded day programs this year, and Meriden has emerged as a national exemplar for expanded learning time as more schools join the NCTL collaborative. The district's programs, says NCTL's Davis, demonstrate "what's possible when children are the center of a united vision" and "prove that many more traditional district schools can add more and better learning time."

Stephen McKeever, vice president of AFT Connecticut, agrees. "We need to take the message from Meriden to other districts," he says, "… and not just poverty districts."

In this report, we look at the key issues that districts and unions must consider when building expanded day programs. Some are overarching, even philosophical—like ensuring that teachers have a voice in planning, building consensus around what "enrichment" means and looks like for a given student population, and reaffirming the goals of teacher collaboration. Others are almost unthinkably myopic—like considering what a shift to an expanded day might mean for scanning barcodes in cafeteria lines and hand-scheduling staff and community volunteers. But for expanded learning to meet its promise of improving student outcomes and teacher collaboration, all issues—big and small—must be given serious time and thought. It is our hope that this report will help teams of teachers, district leaders and community members do just that.

Chronology

2011-12:

- District and union leaders attend NCTL meeting in Boston at invitation of the AFT.
- Meriden Federation of Teachers applies for and receives AFT Innovation Fund grant (March and June).
- Planning begins to open first expanded day school, Casimir Pulaski Elementary School.

2012-13:

- Pulaski opens as pilot expanded day school.
- Planning begins for second expanded day school, John Barry Elementary.

2013-14:

- John Barry opens as expanded day school.
- Pulaski model shifts from enrichment staff (on stipends) to two-shift teaching schedule in full implementation.
- Planning begins at Roger Sherman and Israel Putnam Elementary, which would bring ELT to four of the district's eight elementary schools; (Putnam is later removed from plans for 2014-15.)

2014-15:

- Sherman to open as expanded day school.

Union-District Partnerships

Shaping the Core Principles of Expanded Learning Time

Few districts and teachers unions have as long-ranging or as strong a partnership as Meriden Public Schools and the Meriden Federation of Teachers. The partnership has allowed Meriden to work through the challenges and setbacks that are part of the implementation of a program as complex as expanded learning time.

"What separates Meriden from other districts is that its superintendent has a specific vision for the district, in addition to strong community connections that have driven that work," says Robert Travaglini, senior director of school and district support in Connecticut for NCTL. "The union partnership and collaborative relationship is a really important component that has allowed Meriden to move forward."

In Meriden's case, district-union collaboration has deep roots in the community and among its leadership. Benigni, the superintendent, attended Pulaski as a boy, and had previously served as the city's mayor. Benham, the union leader, has taught in the district for more than three decades and was first elected MFT president in 2007. Together, the two have led the district and union through a highly productive period of collaboration, including the introduction of peer coaching, professional learning communities, and programs to foster teacher leadership. This ongoing partnership opened the door for the union to consider a grant from the AFT Innovation Fund and to work with the district on other grants. Once the grant for expanded learning time was approved, the long-standing relationship allowed district and union officials to quickly come to consensus on the key principles that would guide the development of the program, including:

Maintaining academic standards. A core principle of Meriden's approach to ELT is that academic standards for enrichment programs are the same as during the regular school day. And the idea that enrichment activities should be fun, not repetitive drilling, was emphasized from the beginning. "If kids are coming in and they're not happy, it's going to be a long day," Benigni says.

Although enrichment activities were designed to reinforce students' background knowledge and reflect each school's individual instructional goals, Benigni says they also are intended to set expectations for traditional instruction for the rest of the day. "As superintendent, my message is that kids have got to be excited and energetic in their learning," he says. "If we give students choice in their learning, it's good for them."

Creating time for collaboration. Along with providing opportunities for enrichment, opening up time for additional professional learning opportunities for teachers was a key element of Meriden's approach, and one emphasized by the union. "It's one thing to expand time," says Travaglini. "But it just gives you the structure to create additional opportunities. It's not going to give you the impact if you don't align it with an instructional component where teachers identify needs for support."

District and union officials underscored the importance of protecting professional development time as schools began planning. For example, one school considered eliminating its early release day as part of its proposal but "realized we'd never do that," Benham says.

Encouraging school-level planning. As they began preparing to implement expanded learning time, Meriden's schools were deliberately encouraged to plan independently of one another. "Every school is different," says Benigni, and district and union leaders wanted to respect each building's contexts, culture and autonomy to the maximum extent possible. As a result, school-based committees made up of teachers and building leaders created different models for expanded day at the three schools that have implemented the model:

- Pulaski initially designed a model in which 16 teachers (earning an additional $7,500 stipend annually) and a small number of volunteers staffed its enrichment program, a 90-minute period composed of two 45-minute blocks before the start of instructional time in the morning. To ensure that these teachers did not experience burnout, and to involve the full instructional staff in expanded learning, the school shifted in its second year of implementation to a staggered schedule in which half the teachers arrived early and the other half arrived late.
- Barry launched its own expanded day program with a staggered teaching schedule and a larger number of community organizations involved with enrichment activities.
- Sherman's 90 minutes of expanded learning time includes 30 minutes of social skills and tiered behavioral support. Twelve positions will be filled by 14 teachers, and unlike the other two schools, the split schedule for teachers will not take place on early-release days, which will allow all teachers time to meet as a faculty.

This sort of autonomy at the school level, says Jeannie Oakes, director of programs in educational equity and scholarship at the Ford Foundation, is an important part of ensuring that expanded learning time doesn't become "a shrink-wrapped reform."

At the same time, planning efforts are coordinated and monitored by the central office. During the 2013-14 school year, leaders of the two schools in the planning phase met routinely with the principals of the two existing ELT schools and central office administrators. Planning teams from the two schools preparing to implement ELT also met regularly. (A detailed discussion of school-level planning begins in the following section.)

Supporting new programs with staffing. District officials created grant-supported stipends to support ELT programs, and each ELT school now has an additional assistant principal-level administrator. School and district officials have also considered creating other positions to support the program, including an expanded day academic coach to monitor the content of enrichment activities and provide feedback to the mix of teachers, volunteers and community organizations leading them.

Meriden also provided funding for the staff of community organizations involved with enrichment activities, such as the YMCA and Boys & Girls Club. At Pulaski, for example, stipended teachers were supplemented by two outside volunteers, including a retired teacher and a floating teacher, and six YMCA staff members.

Contract Considerations

The opportunity for Meriden Public Schools and the Meriden Federation of Teachers to implement expanded learning time began just months after the union and district signed a three-year contract in September 2012. Over the years that followed, issues that arose during the implementation of expanded days were addressed informally by district-union leadership teams, including:

- Contract hours remained unchanged, with a small number of teachers who volunteered to work the full expanded day paid a stipend agreed upon by the union and district.
- District and union leaders agreed to allow grade-level transfers for any teacher who had difficulty reporting at an earlier time—for instance, a first-grade teacher unable to arrive for the earlier teaching shift at a school with staggered schedules would be transferred to a grade whose teachers were on the later shift. Only a few teachers made such a request in the program's first two years.
- Teachers at all schools implementing or planning expanded day could be moved to the front of the transfer list if they did not want to participate in the program. To date, only one teacher has requested such a transfer.

MFT is scheduled to enter negotiations in fall 2014 for a new contract that will go into force in September 2015—and even if contract negotiations weren't at hand, Benham is aware of the importance of formalizing roles in such nontraditional arrangements as ELT. "We have a lot of informal agreements, but we also recognize we need to make some of these policies and procedures more formal so they're down on paper and not relying on people for the history," she says.

For MFT, this work will largely be uncharted territory, with little precedent beyond its own informal agreements with the district, Benham says. "It's hard because no one has contracts with [ELT]."

Among the issues that MFT plans to address in its upcoming negotiations:

- Specific language governing transfers when teachers are unable to report for earlier start times. "The question has been posed of what happens when there isn't an opening and an easy remedy," Benham says. "That's going to be contract language we have to look at."
- More specific language detailing the times for each shift in schools with staggered schedules. Though the number of contract hours has remained the same at all Meriden schools, Benham sees a need to formalize the approach to staggered schedules in the contract—much as MFT and the district included detailed language when weekly early-release days for professional development were approved in an earlier contract. However, it's also important not to set definitive starting and ending times. "A bus situation could change, and we realize that a school has to open at 7:45 instead of 7:30," Benham says.
- Specific language addressing the impact of delayed openings for bad weather and early release time on teacher schedules in ELT schools, which has led to some confusion among teachers.

A host of nonteaching—but equally important—staffing needs also should be considered, including paraprofessionals, clerical staff, transportation, nurses, food services and more. For example, one school realized it needed to add a morning clerk to handle attendance, while another needed to reassign staff to greet walkers in the morning.

Leveraging central office staff to support school-based planning. Meriden's central office directly supported the program, with staffers from finance to IT helping write grants, arrange technology and assist planning teams at each school in handling logistics. Some central office staff even helped out in computer labs at the ELT schools at the beginning of the year to support teachers.

Investing in facilities. Like time itself, physical space poses constraints on academic programs. Using grant money and other funds, Meriden invested heavily in its schools offering ELT, adding computer labs, revamping gyms, and renovating other spaces to maximize the use of space for expanded day programs. At Pulaski, for example, six teachers were moved from the reading specialist's office and other specialized space to create the school's large computer lab.

"We knew from the start we wanted to make the most of our buildings," says Benham.

Committing to transparency. Meeting monthly with teachers from the initial decision to apply for the grant through implementation, Meriden union and district leaders pledged to listen—and to address any problems that arose. "Be honest about what needs to be fixed, and don't be afraid to acknowledge what needs to be fixed and make additional changes," Benigni advises.

That's an approach other districts should heed, says McKeever of AFT Connecticut. "No complaint is too small—you have to hear everybody," he says. "Everyone needs to feel that they are at the table and have a voice."

Key Considerations for School-Level Planning

When Sherman Elementary was selected by district officials to implement expanded learning time for the 2014-15 school year, the school's leaders began planning more than a year in advance—a lesson learned from the accelerated timetables for implementation at Meriden's first two ELT schools. For that reason, it provides perhaps the strongest exemplar of school-level planning for other districts and unions to consider.

More than a year before implementation, Sherman school leaders began selecting a planning team made up of a broad cross section of teachers to lead the process. "Climate is key to making this work," says Principal Lysette Torres. "We wanted communication and a transparent process that involved everyone."

Among the steps Sherman took:

Building a team. To solicit members for the planning team, Sherman's principal sent an email to the entire teaching staff to gauge interest. Almost 80 percent responded, and the prospective pool was narrowed down to be representative of all subjects and grade levels, including teachers from both K-2 and 3-5, building-level union leaders, and special education. The principal and instructional associate, a school-level role analogous to an assistant principal elsewhere, rounded out the team.

Norming team routines. Once selected, the planning team began meeting before the 2013-14 school year began in August, starting with a book study of *Our Iceberg Is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions* as a norming exercise. Throughout the year, the team met regularly, including sustained all-day meetings several times a month during which the team's teacher members were relieved of classroom duties. "It really takes that kind of time to plan all this," says Nedra Miller, Sherman's instructional associate.

The team considered splitting into smaller groups to handle different elements of planning—scheduling, staffing, coordination—but ultimately chose to tackle all issues as a unified group. "That depends on the culture of the school and team," Miller says.

Establishing a focus. A series of meetings with all staff held during the fall helped identify key needs, including a schoolwide focus on intervention and acceleration, as well as the need for tiered behavioral support. Along with helping shape planning for enrichment activities, these discussions also led to common instructional language across grade levels, and fostered a greater focus on common needs both across and within grade levels. "Teachers really need to understand

the purpose of this work," says Miller. "If they don't understand the why, they can't get into the how."

Identifying non-negotiables. Among Sherman's non-negotiables were set amounts of instructional time for language arts, math, art, music and physical education; lunch schedules; and maintaining time for tiered support in reading.

Soliciting suggestions. The team created a suggestion box for ideas and questions, which regularly were addressed during faculty meetings and helped shape the details of the program. For example, teacher feedback prompted the team to shift from holding breakfast for all students in the cafeteria to holding it in their classrooms, as well as keeping kindergartners in their classrooms instead of rotating among enrichment activities.

Planners also maintained their own "parking lot" on a bulletin board, posting questions of their own and referring them to union and district leaders when answers weren't available within the building.

Identifying enrichment staff and activities. The team identified teachers who wanted to participate in the stipended ELT program. Ultimately, 14 teachers were selected; they had differing interests and areas of expertise, ranging from Native American storytelling and environmental science to insects. The team also identified broader schoolwide staffing needs for consideration by the central office, including a morning clerk to help with attendance, and additional reading and special education staff.

Regular meetings with other ELT schools. Although Sherman maintained autonomy throughout the process, the principal and other team members met regularly with counterparts from the other district schools that had implemented or were planning expanded days. All four principals also met regularly with each other and central office administrators. The team also held joint meetings with Putnam, the other school that at the time was planning to implement ELT during the 2014-15 school year.

Joining a cohort of ELT schools. All three of Meriden's ELT schools are part of NCTL's Connecticut TIME collaborative, a cohort of schools throughout the state working to implement expanded day programs. Sherman's planning team met regularly with the collaborative during the year, and will continue to participate as part of the Connecticut collaborative's second cohort once implementation begins in the fall.

Preparing community partners. Although the community partners that will work with enrichment activities at Sherman are the same as Meriden's existing ELT schools, the team brought their leaders into the school early on to discuss the instructional focus and the specific details of its own plans.

Parent outreach. Throughout the planning year, Sherman parents were kept informed through regular meetings of its parent-teacher organization and school governance council.

Many parents were familiar with the idea of ELT because it was already in place in two other community schools, so there weren't many of the broader questions or concerns raised by parents at Barry and Pulaski. To begin sharing the specific details of what ELT would look like at Sherman, school leaders scheduled a parent meeting focused on implementation in April.

Scheduling. Sherman had the advantage of a full year to build consensus among staff and incorporate teachers' suggestions into scheduling, the most time-consuming part of the process. Its model wound up having significant changes from the existing ELT schools, including adjustments to the staggered schedule on early-release days so the full staff could meet for professional development.

Training community partners. Sherman began training representatives from YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club in the spring, so "we can come in September and they know how it works," says Torres.

Because of the broad-based participation of teachers—both on the team and across the faculty as a whole—the planning process proved a valuable exercise in developing shared goals and vision for instruction, says Torres. "Even if this [ELT] program did not happen, the process has been really helpful for Sherman," she says, "because we identified areas for growth across the school."

4

Strategies for Effective Scheduling

With so many moving pieces in a typical school—students, teachers, staff, transportation, food service, to name just a few—it's not surprising that scheduling remains the largest and most complex challenge in implementing an expanded school day. As one teacher involved in the planning process said, "It's hard to wrap your mind around designing a different school day."

But in schools across the country that have tackled creating expanded learning time, it's also provided an opportunity to rethink decades-old schedules and much of what happens during the school day.

The work involves both looking at broad needs and requirements and drilling down to specific individuals and schedules. "We did our schedule 'big picture,' then started filling in the gaps," says Christine Laferriere, Pulaski's instructional associate. It's also incredibly time-consuming, and, if teams aren't given the time to appropriately address it, it can crowd out planning for other critical components of an expanded day program.

Among the strategies for scheduling emphasized by Meriden's teams:

Identifying elements that cannot be changed. In Meriden's case, the major constraint was transportation, with busing schedules dictating the specific timing of the longer school day at each of the three schools that have begun implementation.

Protecting core instructional time. At all schools, the time spent during the core school day remained largely the same—even with larger structural changes that staggered instructional schedules and teacher arrival/departure times. "Core time is sacred time," says Elsie Torres-Brown, principal at Barry Elementary.

Identifying opportunities to reconfigure instruction. At the same time, an expanded day provides opportunities to think about when students of different ages do best with core instruction. At Pulaski, for example, younger students receive enrichment in the afternoon because they're more likely to be tired at the end of the day. The staggered teaching schedule used by Meriden's schools provides the opportunity "to take into consideration when students need academics during the day," says Lysette Torres, Sherman's principal.

Expanded time can open up space to enhance additional academic programs, such as intervention and "specials" such as art, music, and physical education. Pulaski shifted classroom schedules to create a 90-minute intervention block in the middle of the day, during which students in each grade are grouped by activity level for differentiated instruction,

including enrichment opportunities for the highest-performing students. These larger differentiated groups, which meet a different number of times a week, have also created more opportunities for students to attend specials (See the artifact on page 30).

Thinking through transitions. A challenge at the elementary level in general, adding complex movements of students to and from classrooms for enrichment during expanded time requires careful planning to ensure that sufficient numbers of staff are present during transitions.

Meriden schools have taken different approaches to transitions. At Pulaski, transitions were staggered by five minutes so not all students were moving from activity to activity at the same time. At Barry (the first school to implement ELT at the kindergarten level), kindergarteners initially didn't move at all—enrichment programs came to their classroom, while other students transitioned between enrichment activities every 45 minutes. Sherman has opted to follow a similar model, keeping kindergarten students where they are and focusing on shifting interdisciplinary enrichment units during ELT throughout the year.

A key element of successful transitions is making sure that everyone involved—teachers, community volunteers and other staff—has common expectations for student behavior, which will be discussed in more detail in Working with Community Partners on page 13.

Identifying personnel gaps. The staggered teaching schedules used by Meriden's ELT schools mean that each school essentially operates at half-staff for 90 minutes in the morning, and again for 90 minutes in the afternoon. Each school has leveraged community partners and reconfigured space, such as large computer labs, to help ensure adequate coverage during these times.

Leveraging physical space. The individual structure of each school offers both opportunities and constraints in scheduling. At Pulaski, for example, one large computer lab accommodates 75 students with two certified teachers (and additional support staff) at once during enrichment time. By contrast, the school's gym was filled to the maximum extent possible to accommodate fitness activities, some of which had to be moved elsewhere.

Adhering to contract provisions. Along with the length of the day, this includes time stipulated for teacher prep and lunch.

Considering every possible detail—and continuing to do after implementation. "You have to zero in on details to make sure everything works," says Pulaski's Coffey. Even so, at both Meriden schools that have implemented ELT, staff members discovered challenges once the school year began, including late openings, scheduled half-days, and arranging for adequate staff at arrival times to accommodate students arriving by bus as well as those who walk to school. Flexibility to accommodate unanticipated challenges is needed at both the school and district level.

5

Working with Community Partners

Community partners have served as the cornerstone of Meriden's expanded day programs, providing staff, support and ready-made enrichment programs at the schools. As with the partnership between the district and the teachers union, the Meriden schools had already fostered long-standing relationships with many community organizations, donating space and time for programs such as an autism center and after-school activities. "Meriden is unique because community groups want to work with the board of education," says state Rep. Catherine Abercrombie.

Even so, Meriden quickly discovered a sizable difference between working with groups offering after-school activities and making them a part of the official school day—even when these groups were the same community partners it had worked with for years. "These partnerships are now embedded in the school day, not just after school where they had no connection to instructional priorities," says NCTL's Travaglini, "and the expectations are different."

Addressing this shift requires careful planning and new levels of training not typically associated with non-school staff. "We're quickly trying to get the skill sets up for these people," says Superintendent Benigni. "It's a lot of people making a lot of decisions during the day"—and together, those decisions made by community partners have a significant impact on the success of the entire expanded day program.

At many schools that have implemented ELT, the sign of limited preparation with community partners is clear, says NCTL's Travaglini—their staffs simply do not use established strategies with routines, transitions and discipline systems.

Among the strategies Meriden has used in working with community partners:

Identifying strong partners. Meriden had the good fortune of existing relationships with community organizations that were already heavily involved with the district. The YMCA had several staff members who are certified teachers, as well as existing connections with the district's Venture Academy, an alternative high school program whose students are involved in enrichment activities under the auspices of the community organization. For example, one Venture Academy student teaches a guitar using donated instruments.

In similar fashion, Boys & Girls Club members were a familiar sight to many students who attended programs sponsored by the organization, which has a grant that aligns with many of the district's goals. For districts, the goal is to ensure that organizations and people "who get the foundational elements of teaching" are the ones designing enrichment," says Benigni.

Respecting partners. "It's important to recognize community partners as just that—community partners," Benigni says. That means paying their employees—Meriden budgeted $15 to $18 an hour for each organization's staff members, depending on whether they hold bachelor's degrees—and providing additional support. (See the artifact on page 35.)

Introducing community partners to each building early in the process. One of the biggest early challenges with Meriden's implementation of ELT was abrupt transitions when students were handed off from school staffers to community partners. District and union leaders acknowledge that having community partners in the school buildings earlier in the planning process would have ensured a smoother transition.

Building common expectations. At Barry, community groups working with students were introduced to the school's positive behavioral intervention and supports system (PBIS) and to expected student behaviors. Members of the community organizations were also included in faculty data meetings "so they can understand our goals," says Barry's principal, Torres-Brown.

Training. In many ways, community organizations, with their young and often untrained staffs, have to endure a "baptism of fire" when starting these programs. "It takes time," says Coffey, and these staff members will need additional training and support as they begin working with students in an expanded day setting.

Training for staff members from community organizations has focused first on classroom-management skills, followed by routines for transitions and other key parts of the day. MFT made additional training available for community organizations, and at Pulaski, YMCA teachers had the school's teaching staff model key elements of classroom instruction for them, including the Responsive Classroom model and "morning meeting" activities.

In many cases, partners also need training in working with students with disabilities and English language learners. "Not everyone participates in after-school activities," Travaglini says. "With ELT, everyone participates, and schools need to understand that staff from community-based organizations need support and training in addressing all students."

Identifying specific areas of expertise. For example, YMCA staff had significant expertise in promoting healthy lifestyles, so staff at Pulaski handed over the fitness portion of the enrichment program. "We told them to take ownership of fitness," says Laferriere. More broadly, volunteers were given much leeway to shape the focus of their enrichment activities—for example, language enrichment at Pulaski focuses largely on Italian because of the background of the volunteer, a retired educator who spent his career in the district teaching the language.

Addressing tensions between partners and instructional goals. Allowing community groups and other volunteers to design enrichment can lead to tension between having that autonomy and ensuring that programs remain engaging and support instructional goals. In Meriden, there's a push to encourage more ownership of enrichment

activities by instructional staff. As an example, to ensure that enrichment time in the gym reinforced core instruction, Pulaski staff worked with YMCA teachers to develop games that encourage counting. "We told them it had to be simple and fun," says Coffey.

Introducing community partners to students. It's critical to acclimate students to the new adults in the building and explain their roles. In that way, says Torres-Brown, students know they play an important role, and aren't just "the Y people."

Focusing on retention and replication. Community partners who spend time in schools become more experienced and capable, so it's important to focus on establishing continuity—not just with organizations, but also with the specific staff people who are working in schools. It's also important to identify examples of good enrichment activities so they can be replicated. "The creativity and good lessons out there need to be captured," says Benigni.

Creating feedback loops. School leaders meet regularly with representatives from their community partners. At Barry, for example, the facilitator meets with his counterparts at the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club every six weeks to discuss progress and identify areas that need to be addressed. "I ask for concerns, goods, bads and uglies," says Daniel Crispino, the school's expanded day facilitator. Crispino also provides informal feedback to individual workers in much the same way administrators do with teachers.

"There's definitely a need for more meetings and communication among partners and staff," he says.

But these feedback loops also should extend beyond operational check-ins. Benigni argues that community partners should be at the table when schools are examining their overall curriculum, as well as participating in professional learning communities. "People should be sitting down and mapping out what this should look like," he says.

District leaders and community organizations alike agree that the benefits outweigh the investment in time needed to prepare community-based staff and volunteers for expanded learning activities. "The staff has been here for two years, and they have bought into the program," says Steve Markoja, the YMCA's operations director. "They've taken an active role."

Designing Enrichment Programs

District and union officials in Meriden quickly agreed that student enrichment activities had to offer just that—enrichment. A key challenge was ensuring that, in the minds of parents, students and teachers, the expanded time for students was not seen as "babysitting."

Among the strategies Meriden used to design effective enrichment activities:

Establishing expectations. From the onset, district leaders made it clear that enrichment activities must follow the same academic standards as the regular school day. "It's worth having enrichment alone," says Benigni, "but it's far better to have it emphasize academic areas like literacy and numeracy."

Connecting the overall program to an area of instructional focus. At all schools, enrichment is intended to reinforce students' background knowledge, but each expanded day school also has connected it to a particular area of instructional focus. At Pulaski, for example, leaders and teachers identified writing as a core student need. Enrichment blocks, where possible, emphasize writing to help "tie enrichment and instruction together," says Coffey. As a result, students participating in woodworking enrichment write journals describing their projects, while the cultural enrichment program includes a pen-pal program. Listings of enrichment programs reinforce the common school focus: "I will show what I know through my writing."

In this way, enrichment can support core instruction in multiple ways. "It's basically like planting seeds," says Laferriere.

Identifying specific programs. The specific focus of enrichment activities depends largely on the interests and abilities of participating teachers and staff of community-based organizations. At Pulaski, school leaders approached teachers and volunteers with core instructional goals—writing, STEM and fitness—and asked them how they connected with their personal interests. Music and art teachers developed programs that built on their traditional curriculum. But a special ed teacher focused on scrapbooking; another teacher with a background in construction focused on woodworking; a school social worker focused on manners and etiquette; and others focused on connecting their own hobbies, including weaving and nature studies.

"We tried to showcase teachers and their strengths," says Laferriere, including developing a brochure of enrichment activities that intentionally highlighted each teacher, allowing them to write the

descriptions for their own activities. Doing so, she says, helped foster buy-in from faculty and made the activities more personal for students.

Embedding academic skills. Enrichment teachers are encouraged to find ongoing opportunities to integrate key skills. In woodworking, for example, students measure and discuss how to calculate perimeters before starting to cut. In an art activity held before Thanksgiving, students wrote a description of a cornucopia before drawing it.

Considering the needs of different age groups. As with primary instruction in general, schools must consider whether different models—and even personnel—are needed to work with students in grades K-2 and those in grades 3-5. A key point that Meriden learned was the need to involve kindergarten staff in planning—which, when done at Sherman, led that school's planning team to avoid transitions for kindergarten students and instead rotate them through nine interdisciplinary thematic units over the course of the year during enrichment time. Involve staff right away, says Benigni. "Their students' needs are different."

Rotating activities. Students prefer rotating between different enrichment components, so in Meriden students shift from activity to activity—or, in the case of kindergarten students who do not transition out of their classrooms, rotate through themes and units. "The best feedback we've gotten from students is that they love when the day is broken up," says Barry's Torres-Brown.

Leveraging technology. Both Pulaski and Barry feature multiple computer labs as a key component of enrichment. Students are in labs as often as three times a week, with a variety of activities to choose from. District officials helped select instructional software, using some basic criteria as a guide—the tools should include rigor and be game-like, fun and differentiated. At Pulaski, for example, lower-performing students focus on leveled literacy skills during computer lab time.

Along with supporting curriculum in highly direct and measurable ways, instructional software can provide data to help identify individual areas of need for teachers to focus on during core instructional time.

Staffing computer labs can be challenging, particularly if teachers aren't comfortable or skilled with supporting computer-centered instruction. School and district leaders should survey teachers ahead of time and be prepared to offer support. At Pulaski and Barry, interns and support staff assist certified teachers in the large technology labs, resulting in a low student-teacher ratio; this gives school officials some leeway to pull staff from the labs when issues arise elsewhere.

The district also has added a new position to monitor the progress of technology use and to support training.

Supporting special education students. Students with special needs often require additional support during enrichment activities. Meriden officials examined the caseloads of special education teachers and paraprofessionals at each school that was implementing

expanded day programs. Its first school, Pulaski, had one of the best staffing levels for special education. Barry had one of the more challenging caseloads, which was complicated by unfilled positions at the beginning of the year when it implemented ELT. School leaders ultimately filled those positions and added additional staff.

In both schools, the scheduling of paraprofessionals was adjusted to provide additional special education support during enrichment. However, teachers emphasize that enrichment activities may benefit these students in outsized ways, given that the activities don't emphasize academic performance in the same way as core activities. For example, a third-grade scrapbooking enrichment activity in a class with high numbers of special education students allows all students to participate—and be successful—in the same way. "Kids want to be included," Benigni says.

Elements of Effective Enrichment

The National Center on Time & Learning has developed tools to monitor enrichment, including one that focuses on seven foundational components:

- Programs expose children to new skills and interests, building engagement and contributing to positive school climate.
- School leadership helps ensure that high-quality staff (teachers and partners) is involved in all enrichment offerings.
- Enrichment offerings are informed by student interests and choice.
- Enrichment offerings provide sequential opportunities to build mastery (introductory and advanced activities).
- Enrichment offerings support schoolwide priorities to build cohesion with core academics.
- There are consistent expectations and norms across academic and enrichment courses.
- Student progress in enrichment courses is monitored and assessed at least twice a year.

Measuring success. Meriden officials say the best enrichment programs have high levels of engagement and students serving in leadership roles in different stations. "It's not different from what I'd look for in a traditional lesson—an enthusiastic teacher and engaged kids," says Benham.

However, many of Meriden's volunteers and employees of community groups are more accustomed to working with children in small-group or one-on-one settings, so helping them adjust to larger class sizes during enrichment activities has been a challenge. At Pulaski, administrators observe enrichment activities and provide "open and frank" feedback, says Laferriere. Volunteers also observe classroom teachers to pick up practices such as classroom management. Pulaski has scheduled "learning walks" of different enrichment activities to help engage volunteers as well as teachers.

Fostering Teacher Collaboration and Instructional Support

As it worked with the district on expanded learning time, the Meriden Federation of Teachers emphasized the importance of improving instruction through increased time for teacher collaboration. This emphasis was a priority for the AFT Innovation Fund and in sync with the successful efforts on the union's part to designate Thursdays as early-release days for teachers to spend time in professional learning communities. "Their leadership is to be credited for creating this [emphasis]," says Stefan Pryor, Connecticut's commissioner of education.

Yet across all schools that have implemented expanded learning nationwide, says NCTL's Travaglini, thinking through ways to improve teacher collaboration has typically taken a back seat to the logistical and scheduling challenges of getting programs up and running.

As with the enrichment program, each school focused on different ways of taking advantage of additional time for teacher collaboration. At all three ELT schools, weekly time devoted to professional learning communities (PLC) has increased from one hour to two. At Barry, additional time for grade-level collaboration was added throughout the school day. Sherman is creating 60-minute blocks of time for grade-level teams to meet weekly.

All stakeholders agree this remains the most challenging piece of the expanded learning time puzzle, particularly because the split schedules in place at Meriden's two expanded day schools have made scheduling all-staff faculty meetings difficult; both schools often schedule separate meetings for each teaching shift. It "sometimes feels like two schools," Benham says. To address this challenge as it implements a staggered expanded day schedule, Sherman is preserving its existing PLC time on Thursdays by shifting to a single start time for teachers that day and having community partners cover the shift in schedules.

Key strategies used to bolster teacher professional support in Meriden include:

Focusing on grade-level teams. Existing grade-level teams have already established protocols for examining student data, as well as implementing behavioral systems and developing tiered support for socio-emotional issues.

Involving classroom teachers with enrichment. The split teaching schedule now in place at all Meriden ELT schools provides all teachers with the opportunity to participate in enrichment activities. Those who do not are still encouraged to make connections with these

activities, such as reinforcing vocabulary learned during enrichment in core classes. District officials stress that it's important to convey the message that everyone teaching enrichment—classroom teachers, volunteers or staff from community organizations like the Y—has something to contribute instructionally and is worthy of respect.

Involving enrichment teachers in collaboration. For example, PLCs that focused on having teachers share lesson plans with one another could invite community partners or others teaching enrichment activities to share their work as well. The same holds true for professional development and other activities, NCTL's Travaglini says. "Partners need training and strategies to align with what's going on in the classroom," he says. "That takes on a whole new dynamic for professional development and training."

Building on foundational elements of collaboration. In Meriden, existing grade-level teams were familiar with the process of analyzing data and grouping students for tiered support, according to Travaglini. The next challenge, he says, is using the additional time provided for collaboration to focus "on the conversations we have in between—about instruction, about constant review, and interim assessments to measure the impact of interventions." Making the most of this collaborative time is a central focus of the third and final year of the AFT Innovation Fund grant.

Vertical alignment. Meriden's grade-level teams are the schools' primary unit of collaboration, but it's also important to take advantage of additional time for collaboration to build all-staff understanding of key goals and objectives, Travaglini says. "It's one thing to develop analysis and collaboration at each grade level in common planning times, but you have to look at the continuum of instruction vertically."

Measuring Academic Impact

The National Center on Time & Learning monitors its cohort schools in the fall and spring of each year, focusing on core instruction, enrichment and interventions. Its supporting members focus on identifying improvements in process and alignment as well as student data, including attendance and discipline statistics. The organization's overall assessment of school progress is based on the following components:

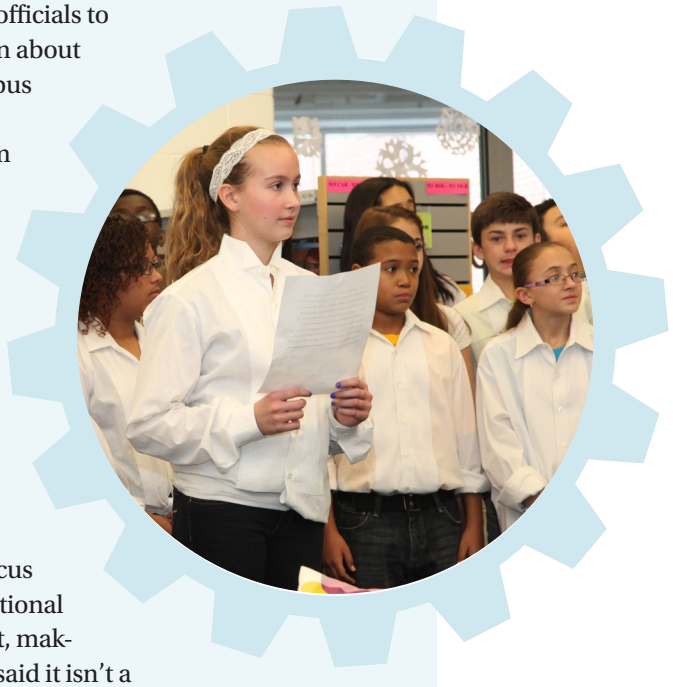
- Focused schoolwide instructional priorities;
- Rigorous academics;
- Differentiated supports;
- Frequent data cycles;
- Targeted teacher development;
- Engaging enrichment; and
- Enhanced school culture.

8

Effective Parent/Community Communication

As much as the transition to an expanded day is a change for schools, it's an equally large shift for students and their families. With elementary-age children, a longer—and earlier—school day can raise concerns about time spent in school and other, related issues.

At the first meeting held by the Meriden district and union officials to discuss the program in July 2012, parents expressed concern about the length of the school day, the earliness of the start time, bus schedules and added homework. The tight timeframe between receiving the grant and opening the first ELT program at Pulaski provided additional challenges.



Michael P. Cardona, a Pulaski parent and vice president of the Meriden board of education, says that he and other parents ultimately saw the benefits of the program. "We initially had concerns about kids going from half-day kindergarten to an expanded day, but it's been great," he says.

Among the strategies the district and ELT schools used to improve communications with parents and the community:

Consistent messaging. Communications to parents focus on the benefits of the expanded day—including the 40 additional days of instructional time. They also emphasize enrichment, making it clear that the program is not about remediation. "We said it isn't a problem with your kid, it's about a better option for all kids," Benigni says. "All children will have an opportunity to grow"—whether that means catching up to grade level or going beyond it.

Different modes of communication. Along with the districtwide meeting to introduce expanded learning time, Pulaski held an open house before the school year started in August to discuss the program with parents. In the weeks before ELT began at Pulaski, Benigni and Coffey also co-authored an editorial touting the benefits of the program (See page 33.), and during the school year, a regular extended-day program newsletter highlights key enrichment activities, awards and other news (See page 34.).

Enlisting the support of community partners. Community partners can help make the connection between improving schools and bettering the community as a whole. "We want a better Meriden," says John Benigni, CEO of the Meriden YMCA, who is the superintendent's brother. "That means better results in the schools, and we've got to spell that out."

Communicating with students. Students, too, need to understand what an expanded day will mean to them, though at the elementary level, that need is largely focused on those in the upper grades. Again, the conversation should focus on enrichment, not the idea of remediation. At Sherman, for example, teachers told students they would get to work on special projects that would be interesting and fun. One teacher had students write essays about how they'd like to see school change, and one wrote that he wished the day would be longer. "You're in luck, my friend," laughs Miller.

Dealing with resistance. When parents expressed concern, most often about the length of the school day, Meriden officials took the tack of asking them to "give it a shot." The superintendent gave a personal tour of the program to one parent, and other leaders focused on similar outreach. The approach paid off, school officials say, because students overwhelmingly enjoyed the enrichment activities. "Even when we had parent holdouts, the kids were the ones who started enjoying it," Superintendent Benigni says. And when parents see that their kids enjoy the program, they also help informally spread the word.

Midcourse Corrections

At both Meriden schools that have implemented expanded learning time, leaders and teachers quickly realized that the programs must change as new challenges and needs arise. "You can't write anything in ink," says Barry's Torres-Brown.

Both schools made significant midcourse corrections. At Pulaski, officials saw high levels of burnout among the cadre of teachers on stipends who stayed for the full expanded day to provide enrichment activities; so, the program shifted to a staggered teaching schedule in its second year of implementation. Almost immediately at Barry, the decision was made not to move kindergartners to enrichment activities after observing challenges with transitions. "We want student choice and voice, but keeping them safe is the number-one priority," says Torres-Brown.

Barry also serves as an exemplar for making larger midcourse corrections—even in midyear, during full implementation of the expanded day—after significant problems arose in the first few months.

When Barry became the second Meriden school to implement an expanded day schedule, it was the first to do so with kindergarten students. When Pulaski had implemented ELT the previous year, its kindergarten program was moved to a pre-K center.

Issues with scheduling, arrival and dismissals, and transitions that had worked well at Pulaski became more challenging when 100 kindergartners were added into the mix, often with limited staffing. Higher numbers of ELL and special education students, many of whom had limited experience with pre-K programs, combined with less extensive community support, complicated matters at the beginning of the year, particularly when positions went unfilled.

Complicating matters further, there was no kindergarten representative on the planning committee, as there hadn't been one at Pulaski the year before since that school's youngest students were first-graders. "Kindergarten is a different animal," one teacher said, and others, in light of the challenges at the beginning of the year, expressed concerns that the expanded day was too long for the school's youngest children and the enrichment activities weren't age-appropriate.

Yet school leaders held fast to a can-do attitude. "I maintain positivity among skepticality," says Torres-Brown.

Working with the district, Torres-Brown added two special education teachers and two paraprofessionals to support the school's special education population. And then, midyear, the district hired Crispino as an expanded day facilitator. Identifying high class sizes in enrichment programs run by the community partners as a key challenge, Crispino worked with teachers and partners to add new programs, including a school newspaper and a karate

program operated by a new community partner, to bring down the class sizes of individual offerings.

In kindergarten, where students initially stayed in their classrooms for afternoon enrichment, students are now grouped using the school's tiered behavioral intervention system and rotated every three weeks among four new programs identified by surveying teachers that reflect the children's interests. To address the needs of younger children, each enrichment activity emphasizes physical movement and hands-on activity. In a science enrichment program, for example, veteran teacher Kellie Summa—dubbed the "Chief Summatologist" during enrichment—has her students don white lab coats and conduct experiments.

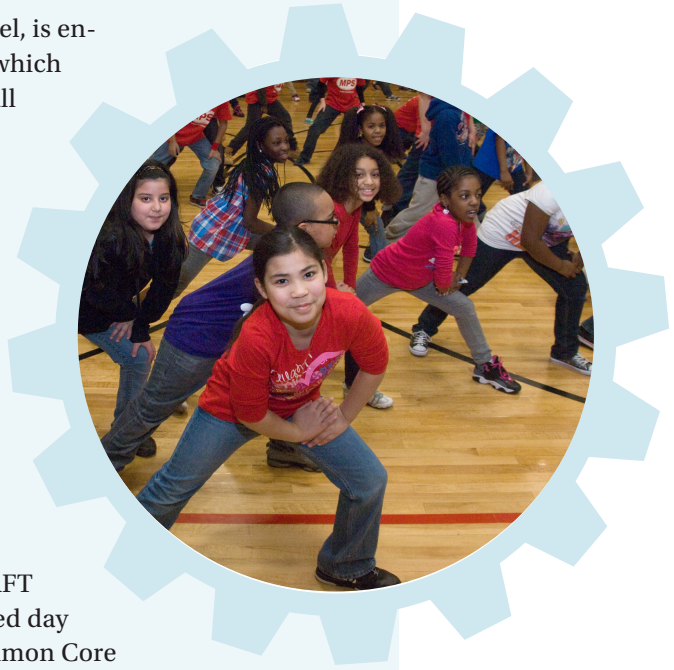
Overall, Barry saw a significant change in climate in just a few months, with evident differences in the quality of enrichment. "The staff had survived the initial shock and was willing to change," Crispino says.

Conclusion

Scaling for Sustainability

With three of its eight elementary schools moving toward full implementation of expanded learning time, Meriden has made significant strides and addressed many of the complicated issues involved in implementing expanded day programs. The national attention it has received speaks to Meriden's value as an exemplar for other public school systems and their unions.

The remaining challenge, both at a district and school level, is ensuring sustainability for expanded day programs. Meriden, which initially planned to expand the program to four schools in fall 2014, instead opted to add expanded learning time only to Sherman because of costs and other constraints. Even so, expenses will increase. The district was able to accommodate the schedule change at the initial two district schools without major changes to its transportation budget, but as Sherman comes online in the fall, the costs for busing will increase substantially.



By creating permanent structures and positions such as the ELT facilitators, the district has signaled its commitment to expanded learning time over the long run. At individual schools, there's a growing effort to codify and develop curriculum around enrichment activities to make them less connected to individual teachers who may leave or retire. The union will use a portion of the third and final AFT Innovation Fund grant to write a curriculum for the expanded day programs that closely ties in with several aspects of the Common Core State Standards. One focus, for instance, will be on having students use technology during the ELT programs, and a new district-level position will help support usage and provide training.

At Barry, Summa has received a grant to plan enrichment activities across all grades, with a focus on STEM-related activities and teaching units based on the history of Meriden. That's a responsible approach, says NCTL's Travaglini. "Now that you're part of the school day, you're accountable for making connections to instructional priorities," he says.

Schools are also working to strengthen the value of expanded time for professional development, as Sherman has done with the adjustments to its staggered schedule on Thursdays to ensure that the staff has time to meet as a whole.

But for all the challenges of expanded learning time, one thing is certain: Public schools and their unions need to explore the kinds of systemic changes shown to have impact on student outcomes. The Meriden partnership demonstrates how collaboration between districts and unions, including teacher involvement in planning and careful coordination

with a host of outside community groups, can make the transformational shift to expanded learning time a reality.

Thoughtful outreach to parents and community partners also has led to broad-based support for the program. Above all, keep in mind that parents understand the importance of education, as evinced by one parent who spoke at a meeting shortly after the idea of expanded learning time was first introduced to the community. "Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the country," said Mike Annino, father of two children at Pulaski. "Someone has to make the step and do something new."

Considerations for Scaling

As districts extend expanded learning time to additional schools, they must pay close attention to whether those schools are prepared to support the program over time. Among the factors that should be considered:

Leadership buy-in. Building leaders must be supportive of teacher collaboration in planning efforts.

Awareness of existing constraints. Plans must acknowledge and work within the contexts of time available due to transportation, staffing limitations, and the constraints of the physical space in each school.

Financial realities. Programs must be sustainable over time—both at the individual school and the district level.

List of Artifacts

Sample Schedules

JOHN BARRY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

	STUDENT DAY GRADE K-2	TEACHER DAY EARLY STAGGER	STUDENT DAY GRADE 3-5	TEACHER DAY LATE STAGGER
7:50 am	Arrival and Universal breakfast	7:40 am Arrival 7:50 Contact with students	7:50 am Arrival	
8:00 am- 2:25 pm	Core Day that includes Academic Intervention Block	Classroom and Support team teach Core Day specialist teach P.E., Technology, and Creative Arts	7:55am -9:20pm Enrichment Block and Universal Breakfast	9:20 am Late stagger Teachers' Day Begins
2:25 pm- 3:50 pm	Enrichment Block	(2:35) Teacher Early Shift Ends	9:20am-3:50pm Core Day that includes Academic Intervention Block	9:20am - 3:55pm Classroom and Support team teach Core Day Specialists teach P.E., Technology and Creative Arts
3:50 pm- 4:00 pm	Dismissal		Dismissal	3:55-4:05 Contact with students 4:15 Late Shift Ends

CASIMIR PULASKI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

	STUDENT DAY GRADE 1-2	TEACHER DAY SHIFT A	STUDENT DAY GRADE 3-5	TEACHER DAY SHIFT B
7:10 am	Arrival and Universal Breakfast	Morning Duty	Arrival and Universal Breakfast	
7:30 am - 2:00 pm	Core Day that includes Academic Support Block	• Grade 1-2 classroom teachers teach Core Day • Specialists teach enrichment and student support	7:30 am - 9:00 am Enrichment 9:00 am - 3:30 pm Core Day that includes Academic Support Block	Shift B begins day at 9:00am • Grade 3-5 classroom teachers teach Core Day • Specialists are student support
2:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Enrichment Block	Shift A Teacher Day Ends		• Grade 3-5 classroom teachers continue Core Day • Specialists teach enrichment
3:30 pm	Dismissal		Dismissal	Afternoon Duty

MORNING ENRICHMENT SCHEDULE DETAIL

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2"></th><th colspan="3">GROUP A (GRADES 5, 4, 3*)
300 STUDENTS</th><th colspan="3">GROUP B (GRADES 1, 2, 3*)
300 STUDENTS</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">7:30 am-
8:10am</td><td>7:30 am -
7:50 am</td><td colspan="2">Fitness
150 Students</td><td>Breakfast
150 Students</td><td rowspan="2">Literacy
100 Students</td><td rowspan="2">Technology
&
Engineering
100 Students</td><td rowspan="2">Science
&
Math
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150 Students</td></tr>
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8:30 am</td><td rowspan="2">Literacy
100 Students</td><td rowspan="2">Technology
&
Engineering
100 Students</td><td rowspan="2">Science
&
Math
100 Students</td><td colspan="2">Fitness
150 Students</td><td>Breakfast
150 Students</td></tr>
<tr><td>8:30 am -
8:50am</td><td colspan="2">Breakfast
150 Students</td><td>Fitness
150 Students</td></tr>
</table>

ROGER SHERMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Kindergarten

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday	Time	Thursday
7:30-2:10	Academics, Specials, Lunch and Recess				7:30-8:55	Intervention/Acceleration/ Cross-Curricular Studies
2:10-3:50	Intervention/Acceleration/Cross-Curricular Studies In-depth, cross-curricular units that include hands-on discovery-based centers, including writing, reading, projects, science, math and gross motor activities.				8:55-2:50	Academics, Specials, Lunch and Recess
					3:05-4:05	Early Release for Students Teachers: PLC

Grades 1 & 2

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday	Time	Thursday
7:30-2:10	Academics, Specials, Lunch and Recess				7:30-8:55	TumbleBooks/Breakfast
2:10-3:50	TumbleBooks/Snack					Enrichment
	Enrichment: Healthy Living, Social Skills, Science, Team Building, Literacy Explorations				8:55-2:50	Academics, Specials, Lunch and Recess
	Intervention/Acceleration				3:05-4:05	Early Release for Students Teachers: PLC

Grades 3, 4 & 5

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday	Time	Thursday
7:30-9:10	Social Skills				7:30-8:55	Social Skills
	Enrichment: Healthy Living, Science, Multicultural Arts, Multicultural Literacy					Math Explorations
	Intervention/Acceleration					Intervention/Acceleration
9:10-3:50	Academics, Specials, Lunch and Recess				8:55-2:50	Academics, Specials, Lunch and Recess
					3:05-4:05	Early Release for Students Teachers: PLC

MPS Meriden Public Schools

Pride In All We Do

Expanded Learning Time Schools

Right here in Meriden!

Students at Casmir Pulaski and John Barry are now attending school 100 minutes more per day, equaling over 40 additional school days per year. Roger Sherman and Israel Putnam are in the planning stages for a potential launch next year.

Expanded Learning Time Positive Results after only 1 year at Pulaski

- achieved the greatest reading growth in the district on the CMT grades 3 to 4
- outpaced the district and state on the CMT in math and reading grades 3 to 4
- demonstrated greater proficiency performance growth than the State on all 10 CMT tests given in grades 3, 4 and 5
- out performed the State's increase on goal on 8 of 10 CMT tests given in grades 3, 4, and 5
- narrowed the achievement gaps with the State on 10 of 10 CMT tests given in grades 3, 4, and 5
- attendance rates improved and are now higher than the district average
- 97% of Pulaski's students feel teachers are fair, caring, and motivate them to learn

Global competitiveness is not something our students will attain with six-hour school days, nine months of the year. Expanded Learning Time allows schools to provide a more well-rounded education that addresses the whole child through enrichment in arts, music, drama, physical education and more.

— National Center on Time and Learning

In partnership with:

aft A Union of Professionals · the YMCA · BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA · NATIONAL CENTER ON TIME & LEARNING · AFT MFT

Meriden Public Schools – The Place To Be!

Dr. Mark D. Benigni, Superintendent

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Extended time provides enrichment

By Mark Benigni and Daniel Coffey

On August 29th, as we welcome back our students and families, Casimir Pulaski Elementary School will begin its extended learning day for all of their students. This exciting opportunity has been made possible through a three-year grant of almost a half-million dollars awarded to the Meriden Federation of Teachers (MFT) by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). This year, Meriden is one of five cities to receive this prestigious award. Past recipients include Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, St Louis and Denver.

With momentum growing across the country to extend student learning beyond the typical 180 six-and-a-half-hour school day, the AFT has provided the MFT and the Meriden Public Schools with this terrific opportunity. All Pulaski students will begin each school day at 7:30 a.m. with a healthy breakfast and a creative learning program. Pulaski will use the extended time for: engaging enrichment; rigorous academics; focused achievement goals; enhanced school culture; and individualized student support.

The extended day enrichment activities will focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), literacy and healthy living. Hands-on activities, interactive experiences, fitness, and nutrition will be the cornerstones of our new program at Pulaski. This extended time will provide students with the equivalent of 40 additional school days. According to the National Center on Time and Learning, "More time affords opportunities to expose students to the world outside their schools and communities, to build new skills and interests that they will pursue throughout their lives, and to offer activities that build a strong school culture — one that values and supports learning." A terrific team of dedicated teachers and community partners will facilitate the new extended day. The Women and Families Center, Meriden YMCA, and Meriden Children First Initiative will work with us to support our creative programming options. We also anticipate receiving professional support from the National Center on Time and Learning headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. While an extended learning day is certainly innovative and desirable, it is the flex-time teacher scheduling that will assure program sustainability and long-term success. The grant provides opportunities for our extended day planning team to work collaboratively on designing an innovative teacher flex schedule. Project Director Christine Winiarski stated, "our school will be a model school not only for our district but nationwide as we improve our practices to maximize student achievement."

The Pulaski facility is in the midst of some major upgrades to support this new initiative. A state-of-the-art technology center will feature 75 new computers, two smart boards, and numerous new software technologies. The gymnasium will be painted and receive a new wood parquet floor, and general maintenance will continue throughout the summer months. As we move forward, we will keep you informed through direct mailings, our school and district websites, automated notification service system messages, cable access and personal communication.

This grant will allow us to have the time to provide a well-rounded education that readies our students for success in college and careers. Please join us as we Dream, Believe, and Innovate! We are confident that our students will be learning in fun, engaging and educational settings. Thank you for all of your support. Congratulations Meriden! Congratulations Pulaski!

Dr. Mark D. Benigni is Meriden's Superintendent of Schools. Daniel Coffey is principal of Meriden's Casimir Pulaski Elementary School.

Parent Newsletter

CASIMIR PULASKI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

THE PRIDE

Extended Day Program

November 2013

DREAM, BELIEVE, INNOVATE!

Dear Parents,

The last day of November is our 61st day of school. One third of the school year will be completed and our enrichment program will have added 5,490 extra minutes of fun, hands-on and innovative lessons for our students.

An important factor in your child's success is attendance. I can not emphasize enough how important attendance is for your child's learning and the learning of others. We are committed to maximizing instructional time as we want your child to learn as much as possible this year. Thank you for your continued support in getting your child to school on time every day!

Safety Update:

Please stay out of the bus drop-off lane during arrival and dismissal times. It is very important that no vehicles pass buses in front of our school.

Our school safety procedures have been in place and all of our exterior doors are locked after 7:30. All students and visitors need to be buzzed in at our front door after 7:40.

The safety of our students is our top priority, and I know you will join me and the Pulaski School staff in our efforts to keep every child safe and secure while here at school.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Laferriere

UPCOMING THEMES

Writing Emphasis in the Enrichment Offerings...

"Students show what they know through their writing."

In the News

Rohan Freeman visited Pulaski's enrichment program. Rohan was the first African American to climb the Seven Summits. He is also the owner of a major engineering corporation located in Hartford, CT. Freeman's message to students included:

"Failure is not an option."

"Elevate your expectations."

He also shared a slideshow of his journey climbing Mt. Everest!

AM ENRICHMENT OPEN HOUSE

Friday, November 15

7:00-9:00 AM

Please Join Us!

Enrichment Awards

These students have earned *Certificates of Recognition* for:

1. **Showing respect for themselves, others and our school.**
2. **Working hard and doing their best.**
3. **Helping others.**

Creative Crafts and Musical Moments

The students in Mrs. Benigni's "choice areas" are hard at work! Genesis is working on making a hot pad to give to someone special in her family. The Wright sisters, Evana and Tiana are strumming away on the guitar, while Giovanna and Emily are learning to read music and play the keyboard,

Ask your child what is his/her favorite part of the Morning Program.

Scrapbooking

Students have completed fall cards where they had to include their favorite fall activities or things they like most about autumn. Some classes have designed and created pencil can holders using recycled materials.

Woodworking

We started off the year in woodworking by learning how to measure with a standard ruler to the nearest ¼ inch. Students then learned the difference between hard and soft wood species, how to gauge the age of a tree, the different uses of wood and the visual differences between a branch and the trunk of a tree. Next, students were taught the importance of safety while working with tools before getting right into using a drill press, hand drill, buck saw with miter box, sandpaper and ruler to create 3 separate projects.

Art

Student drawing began with a visual awareness of their surroundings. From these thoughts and memories students are bringing to life an assortment of drawing techniques. Learning to draw will be a lifelong communication tool necessary in their future fast paced life. Students have been and will continue to use these art vocabulary words throughout the year: balance, color, grouping, design, proportion, repetition, curve, silhouette, spiral, symmetry, taper, texture, tilt, 3-d, and twist. When done students will have the power to draw anything they want and not be afraid (like so many adults are) of drawing.

Nature Studies

Our first learning cycle this year was called "Cicada Mania." Students learned about this special insect and examined real specimens that showed different stages of life development. The next area of study was about the autumn season and important changes that occur at this time of the year. Students learned about leaf characteristics and observed different types up close. Our present learning cycle is the study of bats. Students are developing a good understanding of how bats fit into ecosystems and are beneficial to mankind.

Culture

In our Culture class we have "traveled" to North America to learn about the first people. We have researched some of the many tribes that inhabited North America before the states were formed. Then we used what we understand about the location to determine what kinds of homes they lived in and recreated the home with a model. Using sand, hay, twigs, etc. we made a mini model of some of the North American structures. The importance of the geography was our focus since it influences their choice of house. We made a mini-weaver, listened to Native American music and realized that they are called Indians due to Christopher Columbus's mistake!

Vision Awareness

The students in Vision Awareness have been busy studying the eye and vision. They enjoyed making a model of the eyeball using paper mache. After making their own blindfold, they participated in various blindfold activities to demonstrate monocular and binocular vision. They had fun finding their "Blind Spot" and "Dominant Eye". Currently, students are writing a description of a picture they drew to provide a detailed description to a person who is blind.

Math

In our math portion of our enrichment program the students have been learning about geometry. They learned how to identify different shapes and their properties, and how to calculate area and perimeter. These skills were reinforced through geoboards and tangrams.

Foreign Language

In Italian, the students have been able to engage in short conversations by asking the following questions:

1) What is your name?
2) How old are you?
3) How are you?.....

They have also learned Days, Months, Dates, Birthdays and Related Puzzles.

~ Ciao, Ciao!

Agreement with Community Partners

MERIDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PRIDE IN ALL WE DO

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
FOR EXPANDED LEARNING TIME SCHOOLS

Community Partner, _____, agrees to provide _____ staff member(s) to the Meriden Public Schools to support Expanded Learning Time enrichment activities at a cost of $15 per hour.

_____ staff with a Bachelor's Degree will be paid $18 per hour. _____ also agrees to provide substitute coverage when one or more of its staff members is absent.

The Meriden Public Schools agrees to pay for _____ staff members at a cost of $15 per hour (or $18 per hour with a Bachelor's Degree). The Meriden Public Schools also agrees to provide training and support to our Community Partners.

Community Partner:

By: _____ Dated: _____

Meriden Public Schools:

By: _____ Dated: _____

A Union of Professionals

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