



Headlines

6.6.08-6.13.08

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1	6.6.08	<p><u>Making it cool for girls to be confident</u></p> <p>Excerpt: Atlanta's East Lake community was a rough place to grow up in 1989, when murder, gangs, poverty, teen pregnancy and drug problems were common. Smith and a small army of volunteers decided to do something to help young girls living in East Lake...Their solution was a support group called Cool Girls.</p>	CNN.com	Katharine Dorsett
2	6.6.08	<p><u>City of Akron scores hat trick</u></p> <p>Excerpt: For the third time in its history, the City of Akron was named an "All-America City" by the National Civic League at its annual competition held this week in Tampa Florida. Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic accepted the award on behalf of the city and its residents.</p>	City of Akron Press Release	
3	6.6.08	<p><u>Hillsborough says it won't ax 'out of school' programs</u></p> <p>Excerpt: Hillsborough County might have an \$87 million budget deficit, but it won't make up the shortfall by reducing or eliminating a popular after-school and summer recreation program.</p>	The Tampa Tribune	Mike Salinero
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7	6.8.08	<p><u>Save after-school programs at KPS</u></p> <p>Excerpt: The Michigan Department of Education has failed to come through for Kalamazoo Communities in Schools' after-school program.</p>	Kalamazoo Gazette	
8	6.8.08	<p><u>On track to college, Laurene Powell's educational startup gets sidelined kids back onto the college path</u></p> <p>Excerpt: David Cruz, a 21-year-old graduate of UC Berkeley, is not just the only man in his family to have gone to college - he's the only man in his family who has never been in jail. But he's seen his share of fights.</p>	San Francisco Chronicle	Carolyn Zinko
9	6.9.08	<p><u>Recovery school district superintendent Paul Vallas aims for long-term stability for school system</u></p> <p>Excerpt: Paul Vallas obsesses over a building. Repeatedly, he drives to the structure at 643 Magazine St., seeing it as a new, improved Rabouin High School in the fall.</p>	Times Picayune	Sarah Carr

10	6.9.08	<u>Fate of D.C. voucher program darkens</u>	Washington Post	Valerie Strauss and Bill Turque
		Excerpt: The groundbreaking federal voucher program that enables nearly 2,000 D.C. children to attend private schools is facing an uncertain future in the Democrat-controlled Congress and may well be heading into its final year of operation, according to officials and supporters of the program.		
11	6.9.08	<u>Candidates are at odds over K-12</u>	Education Week	Alyson Klein and David J. Hoff
		Excerpt: As the presidential primary season ended last week, presumptive nominees Senators John McCain and Barack Obama appear to agree on the basics of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) but have contrasting views on K-12 policy.		
12	6.10.08	<u>Asian Americans' academic success misleading, report says</u>	Los Angeles Times	Gale Holland
		Excerpt: The success of some Asian American and Pacific Islander college students has given rise to a myth of the "model minority" that obscures important differences within a diverse population whose educational needs are often neglected, according to a report released Monday.		
13	6.10.08	<u>Survey gives L.A. charter schools higher marks</u>	Los Angeles Times	Mitchell Landsberg
		Excerpt: It's the \$64,000 question of public education: Are charter schools better than their traditional public school counterparts?		
14	6.10.08	<u>Learning (and succeeding) on Jump Street</u>	Wall Street Journal	Gary Fields
		Excerpt: As a middle-school student in Ward 8, one of the tougher areas of the nation's capital, Elisabeth Robinson did badly at school on purpose to keep out of fights. "Anything you do could get you jumped -- could get you shot up,"		

she said. Her solution was "to dumb down who I was."

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| 15 | 6.11.08 | <u>Students likely to fail high school exit exam can be identified as early as 4th grade, study says</u> | Los Angeles Times | Seema Mehta |
| | | Excerpt: As early as fourth grade, students who will be at risk of failing the high school exit exam -- a state requirement to earn a diploma -- can be identified based on grades, classroom behavior and test scores, according to a new study released Tuesday. | | |
| 16 | 6.11.08 | <u>Chicago district focusing on pathways to college</u> | Education Week | Christina A. Samuels |
| | | Excerpt: Many high school seniors plan to attend college when they graduate, and often times these plans do not match reality. | | |
| 17 | 6.12.08 | <u>Editorial: Money will be needed for extending school day</u> | Andover Townsman (MA) | |
| | | Excerpt: Adding one hour and 40 minutes to each school day would be a radical change to the high performing Andover Public School System. | | |
| 18 | 6.12.08 | <u>Longer school day: Expanded learning time pros and cons</u> | Andover Townsman (MA) | Bethany Bray |
| | | Excerpt: "I'm always hearing from teachers that there's not enough time," Superintendent Claudia Bach said. "We really need more time to do the academic things, not just extra curricular." | | |
| 19 | 6.12.08 | <u>Longer school days? Teachers say 'not one more minute'</u> | The Philadelphia Daily News | Mensah H. Dean |
| | | Excerpt: The city teachers' union is balking at a school district proposal that teachers and other school employees work longer days starting this fall. | | |
| 20 | 6.12.08 | <u>Department of Education adopts new method of determining dropout rate</u> | The Meridian Star (MS) | |

Excerpt: Mississippi Department of Education officials say the state's dropout rate is 15.9 percent, when counted with what they consider a more accurate system for tracking graduates.

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| 21 | 6.12.08 | <u>Youth development and 4-H get results</u> | Cherokee Chronicle Times | |
| | | Excerpt: You may assume that adolescents are inherently "at risk" and try to "fix" their problems. Or you may take another perspective --- positive youth development -- believing that youth have assets and can become constructive contributors to society. | | |
| 22 | 6.12.08 | <u>Board-certified teachers boost student scores</u> | USA Today | |
| | | Excerpt: Schools looking to hire teachers should keep an eye out for those with national board certification. Students taught by educators certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards make bigger gains on standardized tests than students taught by other teachers, finds a National Research Council report out Wednesday. | | |
| 23 | 6.12.08 | <u>Democrats offer plans to revamp schools law</u> | The New York Times | Sam Dillon |
| | | Excerpt: Democrats are dividing into camps as they debate a new course for education policy after President Bush leaves office. | | |
| 24 | 6.13.08 | <u>Town debates extending the school day</u> | Andover Townsman (MA) | Bethany Bray |
| | | Excerpt: After an \$11,000 study to examine extending the school day, the list of Andover schools considering the idea for a fall 2009 launch has dropped from six to two. | | |
| 25 | 6.13.08 | <u>Duffy wants to restore funds for after-school programs in</u> | Democrat and Chronicle (NY) | Erica Bryant |

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Excerpt: Mayor Robert Duffy plans to restore funding to city-operated recreational programs that are housed at 11 city schools. Duffy's original \$478 million budget proposal called for the elimination of after-school recreational programs that the city operates at schools during the school year and the summer. The cuts would have affected about 2,000 students.

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CNN.com

Making it cool for girls to be confident

6.6.08

Katharine Dorsett

Atlanta's East Lake community was a rough place to grow up in 1989, when murder, gangs, poverty, teen pregnancy and drug problems were common.

"There was a gang there that had practically taken over called Down by Law. This part of town was plagued with all types of crime and trouble," Atlanta attorney Dawn Smith said.

Smith and a small army of volunteers decided to do something to help young girls living in East Lake. Their solution was a support group called Cool Girls.

"The enthusiasm of the girls, my desire to give back and the fact that I was in the right place at the right time is how Cool Girls started."

Today, the Cool Girls after-school program is staffed with hundreds of adult volunteer mentors who provide academic and emotional support to about 450 girls in third through eighth grades.

Nicole Samuels, who just completed the eighth grade, is grateful to be a part of the Cool Girls program.

"The best thing about it is it helps build your self-esteem. It helps you to be positive. If your mother is not there, you always have a mentor to help you," she said.

The Cool Girls learn conflict resolution, positive peer interaction, pregnancy prevention and how to boost their self-esteem.

Each summer, the Cool Girls camp offers experiences for young girls to learn financial literacy and leadership skills. There's also a new fitness program to combat childhood obesity.

Cynthia Tucker, the Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial page editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, is one of the best-known volunteers of the program.

"We do everything we can to help make these girls' lives as enriched as possible. We encourage them to stay in school, not to get pregnant and not to get obsessed with boys," Tucker said.

"Volunteers like me try to serve as positive role models and mentors. Many times, girls in this program do not have responsible caregivers in their homes to look up to."

And it appears that the program is paying off.

A 2007 study conducted by Georgia State University found that Cool Girl participants earned higher grades and performed better on standardized tests.

"Girls living in poverty need to know it is cool to go to school daily and uncool to skip school. Our program drives home these lessons and offers support," said Cynthia Moreland, executive director of Cool Girls.

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City of Akron Press Release
City of Akron scores hat trick
6.6.08

For the third time in its history, the City of Akron was named an "All-America City" by the National Civic League at its annual competition held this week in Tampa Florida. Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic accepted the award on behalf of the city and its residents.

"This affirms the outstanding work of many people in our community who have worked so hard to make Akron one of this country's great places to work and live," said the Mayor.

A delegation of 66 people from Akron was on hand to applaud the city's victory in the competition, often referred to as the Oscars for America's cities.

Representatives from Akron schools, the business community, non-profit organizations, neighborhood groups and the University of Akron participated in the 10-minute presentation to a panel of 10 judges Thursday and attended the Awards Ceremony Friday.

Akron's delegation of 66 as it makes its presentation to the National Civic League judges in Tampa, Florida. Akron was selected from a large field to be named an All America City, based on this presentation. Mayor Don Plusquellic accepted the award on behalf of the citizens of Akron, which has won the award three times. This year, 1995 and in 1981. (click image to enlarge)

Plusquellic was accompanied to the stage to receive the award by two students from Perkins Middle School-eighth graders Tyrell Butts and Devonte Roper- participants in Alchemy, Inc., an after-school program at Perkins Middle School.

The competition required presentation of one youth project in the community - in Akron's case - the Perkins Activities Central after-school program, funded by the Knight Foundation. Carla Sibley, Coordinator of Special Projects for the Akron Public Schools expressed to judges how the program has impacted the lives of Tyrell, Devonte, and other young men.

Competitors were also required to identify two community challenges and how the city faced them. Akron identified its need to build and pay for new schools as Community Learning Centers to retain young families in the city, and the need to increase employment, especially in technology-related business.

David James, executive director of business affairs of the Akron Public Schools and its new superintendent effective next month, described the extensive community participation behind the design of each one of Akron's 47 new buildings to be built over 12 years.

Bennett Williams, president & CEO of the Akron Urban League, detailed for the judges the successful marriage of its new headquarters building with the Helen Arnold CLC, and the increased enrollment in their GED classes, computer learning and job placement programs.

To illustrate the impact of the Akron Global Business Accelerator's (AGBA) current 39 tenants, and 65 graduated companies that now employ more than 750, Mike LeHere, director of the AGBA used the example of incubator tenant InSET Systems. InSET has crafted a technology solution to locate coal miners underground,

Following the presentation, judges had the opportunity to probe further during a 10-minute question and answer period. Community responses were offered by Akron City Council president Marco Sommerville, Akron School Board president Linda Omobien, (uh MOE bee un) and Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank CEO Dan Flowers, along with the presenters.

According to the National Civic League, "the All-America City Awards recognizes communities for collaboration, inclusiveness, and successful innovation. All-America Cities demonstrate community-wide civic accomplishments, cross-sector cooperation, grassroots participation, and creative approaches to issues."

In order to be selected as a finalist in the annual competition, Akron was required to submit an extensive application (2008Application.pdf) with detailed information about the city, its history, challenges, and impact of the three community projects.

The live presentation was scripted by Dave Lieberth, deputy mayor for administration, who also produced Akron's successful presentation in 1995. "I'm looking forward to re-designing the city's logo," said Lieberth. (The Akron logo contains the words "All America City- 1981, 1995.")

All 66 Akron delegates backed-up the presenters on stage. When the chief judge asked, "Akron are you ready?" the group responded in unison, "Judges, the City of Invention is ready and rarin' to go!" As backdrop to the presenters, members of the group held up a 6' x 20' canvas mural depicting Akron's skyline painted by Todd Volkmer of Akron Northside's galleries.

Others participating in Tampa included University of Akron VP John LaGuardia and University Park Alliance executive Ken Stapleton, Greater Akron Chamber President Dan Colantone, Knight Foundation Akron Program Director Vivian Neal, Summit County Juvenile Court Judge Linda Teodosio, AMHA Executive Director Tony O'Leary, Akron YMCA president Doug Kohl, United Way President Robert Kulinski, Akron Zoo V.P. Doug Piekarz, Info Line President Richard Stahl, and representatives from the International Institute, Summa Foundation, Perkins Street Area Action Group, R.I.G.H.T., GlobeChem Marketing, Salvation Army, and Akron Children's Hospital.

The Tampa Tribune
Hillsborough says it won't ax 'out of school' programs
6.6.08

Mike Salinero

TAMPA - Hillsborough County might have an \$87 million budget deficit, but it won't make up the shortfall by reducing or eliminating a popular after-school and summer recreation program, commissioners pledged Thursday.

At a budget workshop, commissioners told County Administrator Pat Bean she would have to look elsewhere to save the \$2.2 million annual cost of operating the county's Out of School programs. Bean eliminated funding for the programs in her fiscal year 2009 proposed budget, which had a host of cost-cutting measures, including 100 layoffs.

Commissioners, however, told Bean the recreation programs will not be part of the cost-cutting plan.

"The goal should be to expand the program to help these kids that have been on waiting lists for literally years," said commission Chairman Ken Hagan.

Commissioners have to reduce spending by \$87 million to make up for property taxes lost to Amendment 1 and slumping sales tax collections.

The county could save \$1.36 million by eliminating the after-school program, which serves 5,600 children at parks in unincorporated areas of the county. An additional \$853,000 would be saved by firing the 175 temporary workers who operate the county's summer recreation program, which has more than 8,000 enrolled.

Parents pay nothing for the after-school program. The summer program costs just \$50.

Hagan said he has received hundreds of e-mail messages from parents throughout the county asking him to save the programs. Most parents said they would be willing to pay a fee to keep the program going. A majority of parents who contacted Hagan oppose transferring operations to nonprofit organizations such as the YMCA.

Rumors have been flying for weeks that the county planned to ax after-school recreation to balance the county budget. The rumors started when parents discovered that the latest master plan for the county parks department said Out of School is unsustainable financially.

The plan recommended ending the program or outsourcing it to nonprofit organizations.

Stacy Lenz, a mother in Westchase, saw the plan on the parks department's Web site and started an e-mail campaign to save the program.

"It's not just about Westchase," Lenz said. "It's about what are those thousands and thousands of children going to do without that program? ... It's a safe environment for kids, and it's a very nurturing environment."

Hagan told Bean to bring back options to continue the programs at a future budget workshop.

Commissioners also balked at other cuts proposed in Bean's budget. For instance, the Aging Services department was slated to lose 13 jobs to save \$886,944. Six of the employees provide services such as housekeeping and companionship designed to keep elderly residents out of nursing homes.

Commissioner Brian Blair, who said he has spent time in nursing homes visiting his grandmother and another relative, asked Bean to find some way to fund the jobs.

"You can certainly keep them out of nursing homes by keeping them company and keeping them active," Blair said.

Commissioner Kevin White questioned whether the eight jobs scheduled for elimination in Code Enforcement would hurt the county's efforts to crack down on people who don't maintain their property.

Code Enforcement director Dexter Barge conceded that the cuts would limit code inspectors' aggressiveness in finding violations on their own.

"What we will have to do is cut back on our proactiveness by responding to complaints," Barge said.

The commission will hold its next budget workshop Wednesday at 1:30 p.m., followed by a public hearing on the budget that evening at 6. The commission will approve the budget Sept. 18.

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WestsideConnect (CA) **After-school program, staff earn accolades** **6.6.08**

NEWMAN – After-school programs in the Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District continue to be a model for others to follow.

The programs served about 500 students a day during the last year, offering recreational and enrichment activities, a safe and supervised setting for students during the after-school hours, homework help and much more.

A success story in its own right, the district's after-school program and three staff members recently were honored as leaders in the three-county (Stanislaus, Calaveras and Tuolumne) region.

Mary Williams, the district's after-school program director, was named the regional director of the year. Yolo after-school program leaders Claire Patereau and Dawn Lamantia were honored as site coordinators of the year, and Yolo was named the region's middle school program of the year.

Williams has been involved in the after-school program since its inception locally 10 years ago, and has seen it grow to exceed all expectations.

“We started with a program at Von Renner, with 20 kids,” she recalled.

Williams believes a number of factors have boosted the popularity of after-school programs, including the safe environment, academic support and the opportunity to take part in enrichment activities which may not be available during the regular school day.

Making an after-school program work well, she reflected, is a team effort involving the county office of education, district administration, site administrators and after-school staff, including high school students who are employed as tutors.

“It requires a certain amount of passion to do this every day,” Williams reflected. “It is about the staff, and the teamwork of everybody involved. Without that teamwork, you wouldn’t have an after-school program.”

Lamantia and Patereau oversee the middle school site that serves about 150 students.

One of the hallmarks of the Yolo program is the wide variety of activities it offers to the students – from drumming sessions to cake decorating.

“We try to find activities that the kids will enjoy so that they come here instead of doing other things that could lead them into trouble,” Patereau explained.

Sometimes, the activities reflect the personal interests of the staff members which they incorporate into the after-school program to share with the students.

Students also have a say.

“The kids have a voice in the program. It is their program,” Lamantia pointed out.

Organizers are not afraid to try new activities.

“If it doesn’t work, we change it. If it works, we build on it,” Patereau explained. “We like having the kids experience something that they have never done before.”

The guiding principle of the Yolo program, Patereau and Lamantia said, is a basic one. “We make it about the kids,” they stated.

The district’s after-school programs are funded through a combination of state and federal grants.

The program will be expanding next year to the high school level, which has not offered a grant-funded after-school offering in the past.

Orestimba is one of four high schools in Stanislaus County which has received federal grant funding for a 2008-09 after-school program, Williams and Superintendent Rick Fauss said. The high school grant will total about \$300,000.

Rocky Mountain News (CO)
Open door needs more messengers
6.7.08

Dave Krieger

Brandon Marshall, No. 15 in your Broncos program, stood in front of a couple dozen kids in a classroom at Wyatt-Edison Charter School in flip-flops, shorts and a Barack Obama T-shirt.

"If you Google my name, you'll see a lot of negative things because I've made mistakes," he told them.

"So I'm not someone here talking to you guys because I'm Mr. Perfect. No. I'm from the same neighborhood you guys are from, the same type of environment, and I'm speaking to you guys from my heart and it's real.

"I don't want to live like my mom and my dad, or some of my family members, where it's week by week, check by check, where it's a struggle. You guys know how it is. No hot water. Bills ain't paid. No cell phone. No food in the 'frigerator.

"I been through it. I been through a whole winter where I didn't have no hot water, no heat. We heated up our house with the oven. So I know what some of you guys are going through. I know it. I still have family that's going through the same thing. You don't want to live that way. You have a chance to make your own decisions and your own choices right now.

"What you guys need to do is really focus and get y'all grades and make something of y'all self. Don't run with the wrong crowd.

"Like I said, I made mistakes. I've made mistakes recently, I've made mistakes a long time ago. It's what you do, it's how you bounce back from it, if you become a better person."

To the Rev. Leon Kelly, sometimes it feels like he's fighting a tidal wave with a bucket. Ever since Broncos cornerback Darrent Williams was killed in a gang-related shooting on New Year's Day 2007, Kelly has been trying to get local professional athletes involved with Open Door Youth Gang Alternatives, the gang prevention program he founded in the 1980s.

In that first flush of shock, everyone wanted to help. On the last day of school a year ago, seven Broncos players dropped by Open Door's after-school program.

It is a sign of the changes in pro football that a year later only one of the seven is still on the roster. Developing mentoring relationships with professional athletes is not as easy as it was back in the day, when players like Claudie Minor came by year after year, even after retiring from the game.

Seventeen months after Williams' killing, the city has moved on. It is polishing its image for the Democratic convention this summer. The mayor and police chief just announced a double-digit drop in the official crime rate.

Somehow, it doesn't stop the flow of funerals for gang-related shooting victims such

as Demetrus Harris or for former gang leaders such as Michael Asberry.

"Any kind of stats can be manipulated," Kelly said. "Right now, we are certainly trying to preserve this image of our city because we're going to make history here in a couple of months. In the wake of everything that's been happening over the last couple of months, the whole thing is 'Suppress, suppress, suppress. Fix it. Fix it.' To keep this image the way that we need."

For all the promises of assistance following Williams' death, Open Door will not run its six-week summer program for the first time in 23 years for lack of funding. Whatever the city says, Kelly sees a gang problem that keeps growing.

"I would say because of the economy it's a little worse," he said. "There's a lot of dope in the city. When these guys who've got felonies try and get a regular job, a legitimate job, they can't get one. The only one that is really an equal opportunity employer and that is hiring is the dope man."

There are symbols of progress. The Darrent Williams Memorial Teen Center opened last month at the Boys and Girls Club in Montbello. The city suspended fees for kids to use the pools at public recreation centers until August.

But gang violence rolls on, much of it unreported. So when Marshall and Elvis Dumervil, two of the Broncos' best-known stars, showed up on the last day of school Thursday, Kelly took full advantage, putting them in a room with the oldest kids, the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders, for about an hour of straight talk.

Dumervil told them about growing up in Miami's Liberty City.

"It's a pretty rough area," he said. "Right now, most of my friends are maybe in jail or dead. It's hard to face reality, but if you don't go to school, you're either going to be dead or in jail. That's the statistics. You want to be in the group that goes to college. That gives you a chance in life."

Signs of hope in Kelly's business are few and far between. Paul Kirk, the director of media relations the Broncos laid off in March, set this one up.

Kelly hopes it will inspire other athletes in town to help.

Marshall, who was reportedly involved in the nightclub dispute the night of Williams' shooting, was eager to share his message.

"When you see something negative going on, you've got to go the other way," he told the kids. "And that's what I'm learning to do with my life because, like I said, I'm not perfect."

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Boston Globe

Schools put off extended day plan, say process will resume in fall

6.8.08

Brenda J. Buote

With the siren call of summer sounding, three of Andover's elementary schools are putting off plans to draft a proposal for a longer learning day.

The Bancroft, Sanborn, and South schools recently let parents know they are slowing the process. At Bancroft and South, it will give the schools time to address other issues before moving forward with the next step - a preliminary plan for an expanded class schedule. The schools intend to continue their examination of the "expanded learning time," or ELT, initiative this fall.

Principal "Scott Morrison at Bancroft has just accepted a job offer in Manchester-Essex, and [South principal] Eileen Woods is retiring," said Lisa Glickstein, grants coordinator for the Andover public schools. "Those were the primary considerations; the principals have learned in this planning year that the process requires a lot of their time and effort. Sanborn just released a letter [on Wednesday] that they are following the lead of Bancroft and South. The fact that some schools have dropped back is one natural outcome of their study process - ELT adoption was never a foregone conclusion."

In all, six schools in Andover received an \$11,000 state grant in the fall of 2007 to explore the possibility of adding 300 hours of instruction to their academic calendar. It was not clear last week whether educators at High Plain and Shawsheen would also take a step back.

If they choose to take the next step, they must submit a nonbinding preliminary plan to the state Department of Education by July 31. Changes to the preliminary plans could be made in the fall, with final plans due in December.

Wood Hill Middle School has already announced its intention to move forward, Glickstein said. She noted that Wood Hill and any other school that drafts a preliminary plan now could see classroom schedules change as early as fall 2009; those that choose to slow the process would not see changes for at least another year.

Talk of adding more hours to the school day has sparked a fractious debate. Some teachers and parents feel a full day would allow the district to redesign the school day, allowing educators to slow the pace of classroom lessons, incorporate more hands-on experiments, and expose young students to a foreign language or the fine arts, while others argue that more class time would not necessarily result in a better education.

Critics point to academic studies that show mixed results with additional class time. One study found that in Finland, where students have scored near the top in international comparisons of achievement for several years, students spend only 600 hours in school each year; in Andover, students are already at school for more than 1,000 hours.

"I would love to see improved academics, and to work with the district on a plan that would accomplish that, but I don't think adding hours to the school day is the way to do that," said Paul Gauthier, parent of a South School student, who says that local educators have denied critics the opportunity to voice their concerns. "If there's truly an issue with the schools, then we should look at different alternatives. But the way this has been presented, people feel like they have no choice, that this is going to be shoved down their throats."

Several parents worry that additional class time would conflict with their children's extracurricular activities and deprive them of time with their families.

"I feel strongly that people need to have the right to be a stay-at-home parent and raise their children if that's the career path they choose," said Catherine Boese, whose children attend Bancroft. "ELT would be taking that opportunity away."

Superintendent Claudia L. Bach, in a message on the district's website, is urging parents to "keep an open mind" and stresses that "no decision has been made to lengthen the school schedule at this time."

Statewide, 18 schools have implemented expanded learning programs, including schools in Boston, Cambridge, and Fall River. In the past, state funding for such initiatives was limited to underperforming schools. This school year, the state for the first time invited all districts to apply for aid to study the concept.

In Andover, where students consistently earn high MCAS scores, the goal would be to ensure that local students are prepared to compete in the global economy, school officials have said. But even with state aid, paying for expanded learning could prove difficult. Andover's bond rating was recently downgraded, in part because the town has been dipping into its free cash to make ends meet.

Still, advocates remain steadfast. They argue that the added class time would benefit many families, noting that in many districts with a longer learning day, students have more quality time with parents and siblings because they have less homework, having completed their assignments at school. Advocates are also quick to recognize that many children participate in afternoon activities, and say they would devise a schedule that respects that, with the final bell at the elementary schools sounding no later than 3:30 p.m.

"People seem to think teachers have a lot of downtime, that they could work more effectively, but anyone who says that has never been in our school," said Brad Heim, who often volunteers at High Plain, where he serves on the ELT study committee.

"When you see the pace of the day, you know if we had more time we could do a better job by our kids."

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Kalamazoo Gazette **Save after-school programs at KPS** **6.8.08**

The Michigan Department of Education has failed to come through for Kalamazoo Communities in Schools' after-school program.

Will this community come through instead?

Communities in Schools administers the 21st Century Community Learning Centers at Lincoln, Northglade and Milwood elementary schools and Milwood Magnet School. It had applied to the state education department for a continuation of a \$600,000-a-year grant for the after-school program that serves 450 children in the Kalamazoo Public Schools district.

Through this program, students who might otherwise be hanging out on street corners or sitting in front of televisions instead stay at school for an additional two hours to receive tutoring and participate in programs under adult supervision.

It's clear, from the 74 grant applications the state education department received from around Michigan for the federal funding from the No Child Left Behind program, that there is a tremendous need for after-school programs in high-poverty areas.

Only 24 of those applications received grants.

KCIS officials had not only asked the state to continue the program, but to expand it to two more middle schools and one high school. All these funding requests were rejected.

Knowing this community as we do, we believe all is not lost.

Two weeks ago, KCIS launched the public portion of its \$2.7 million campaign to fund its operations for the next three years.

Could this community raise an additional \$600,000 for the coming school year to keep the after-school program going next fall? We believe it can, especially if KCIS can demonstrate to the public that there are measurable benefits to the program.

Results of a two-year study, released earlier this year by researchers at the University of California, Irvine, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Policy Studies Associates Inc., showed that regular participation in a high-quality after-school program is linked to significant gains in standardized test scores and work habits, as well as reductions in behavior problems among disadvantaged students. These gains also help to offset the negative impact of a lack of supervision after school.

There have been many worthwhile programs funded by grants, that, once the grants dry up, have been picked up locally.

One notable case is the county drug courts, originally started with federal grants through the U.S. Justice Department. As grant dollars dwindled, it became apparent four years ago that this worthwhile program, which helps people kick their addictions and diverts them from jail or prison, would be on the chopping block. So the private Drug Treatment Court Foundation was established to raise funds to keep these courts going.

If people here believe after-school programs in Kalamazoo Public Schools are a priority, they'll put their money where their hearts are.

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San Francisco Chronicle
On track to college, Laurene Powell's educational startup get sidelined kids back onto the college path
6.8.08

Carolyn Zinko

David Cruz, a 21-year-old graduate of UC Berkeley, is not just the only man in his family to have gone to college - he's the only man in his family who has never been in jail. But he's seen his share of fights.

On the first day of class his freshman year at Menlo-Atherton High School, he learned that he'd already been designated a Latino gang member based on family ties. "My brother wasn't even at that school - he was kicked out - but he was top dog in his area and I didn't even have my own identity," said Cruz, who was raised in East Palo Alto. "I was just his little brother."

During a tussle on campus six months later, Cruz was knocked unconscious. His mother's disapproval was clear: She told him he was going to turn out like his brother. He left home to live with an aunt, thinking the rift would blow over. Instead, his mom brought his Nintendo over and told him to "have a good life."

He decided to make a change. "Nobody feels good when they don't go to school and their brother's in jail," he said. "I had an epiphany, and it was that I was going to die in the street, or take my life in my own grip."

Cruz and Laurene Powell, a former Goldman Sachs analyst and wife of Apple Inc. co-founder Steve Jobs, are unlikely friends. But they've become protege and mentor, thanks to College Track, an organization Powell helped create. The educational nonprofit was founded in East Palo Alto in 1997 to help low-income students boost their grades, apply to college and obtain scholarships.

Students must apply to the after-school supplement to their high school studies and maintain a 3.0 grade point average. Those who falter are steered into a counseling group called Inspire, which tries, through group chat sessions, to motivate them to try harder.

There's fun, too - summer field trips to Yosemite and Tahoe, because many students have never experienced the outdoors. And tucked into all this is counseling. College Track officials find there are times when they have to cajole parents into allowing their children to attend college out of the Bay Area or out of state. Parents who don't speak English often look to their children as leaders, relying on them for help with translating and enlisting them in child care duties. They want their children close to home.

With branches in Oakland and San Francisco and another slated to open soon in New Orleans, College Track is an ambitious effort, with a low-key, determined visionary at its core. Powell's no-nonsense interaction with students, Cruz said, led him to see that he had to work hard to be taken seriously. After he was admitted to College Track, he began doing his homework, asking questions and getting A's. He also reconciled with his mother and moved home. "I didn't realize how easy it is to get by if you just put your mind to it," he said. "Before that, school was just a place I went."

Confronting the inequities

Powell, a New Jersey native with a degree in economics from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and a master's degree in business administration from Stanford University, created College Track with her friend Carlos Watson, a graduate of Harvard and Stanford Law School.

Both began volunteering at Carlmont High School in Belmont in 1995, in a program called AVID - Advancement Via Individual Determination - and noticed that students of color were often automatically placed in remedial classes their freshman year. The result was that those students were not taking classes at a level necessary for college admittance, so dozens, if not hundreds, of smart kids were sidelined.

Powell - who had worked as a trading analyst at Goldman Sachs and had formed her own organic food company, Terravera, after business school - had more than enough work on her hands. She was starting a family and trying to scale back. But, upset by what she saw, she felt compelled to confront the educational inequities. That's when she and Watson founded College Track.

"I didn't know where it was going to lead, but I was outraged," she said in an interview at her spare, airy office in a Victorian in downtown Palo Alto.

"If you're a kid who has taken algebra in middle school and gotten an A and are put in ninth grade in a pre-algebra class, it can make you very angry. Given that you're going to high school 45 minutes away, your parents are working two jobs, parental involvement is needed and there's one counselor per 1,600 students, you feel stuck ... very angry. This is why kids get disenfranchised."

Watson, founder of a for-profit educational firm, Achieva, now works as a political analyst for CNN in New York. He was driven to start College Track because he had been, as he put it, "the kid who got into too much trouble" in his youth.

"I have a deep personal appreciation for how important second chances are," he said in a telephone interview from New York, "and how important focused mentoring is, and how important education - really good education - is."

Socioeconomic and racial challenges had been long-standing at Carlmont in 1997. In 1976, administrators closed Ravenswood High School in East Palo Alto because of declining enrollment and began busing students to other high schools throughout the Sequoia Union High School District, with most ending up at Carlmont. Before that, Carlmont, on a wooded suburban hillside high above the Oracle towers, had been mostly white.

According to former Carlmont Principal Debbra Lindo, the Ravenswood School District lacked records that would have helped place students in appropriate classes. As a result, she said, assumptions were made. It was also difficult, she said, for parents - many of whom did not speak English - to communicate with the school district to ensure their children were taking the right classes. When students were placed in Advanced Placement classes, Lindo said, they weren't prepared for the rigorous work, and the teachers didn't always know how to help students thrive.

The racial tensions were the basis for the book "My Posse Don't Do Homework," by Carlmont teacher LouAnne Johnson, which was turned into the 1995 film "Dangerous Minds."

Lindo says teachers were trying to address the problem in the mid-'90s. The AVID program was operating and Lindo was facilitating conversations among teachers, students and parents about the subject of race, class and school boundaries. She even shut the school down several times to have "days of respect" conversations among students.

When Powell and Watson formed College Track, Lindo - like other officials in the school district - welcomed their efforts. "I thought, 'If someone wants to help me bridge the achievement gap, why would I say no?' " recalled Lindo, who left the school in 1999 for a job outside public education. She is now chief executive officer of College Track.

Track record

College Track opened in a warehouse building on Bay Road in East Palo Alto and accepted 35 students its first year. Today, there are more than 350 high school students enrolled in the program at its three Bay Area campuses, which together have a yearly operating budget of \$3 million.

This year, College Track moved across the street to a larger building near the baylands in East Palo Alto. It also operates from an office on 14th Street in downtown Oakland and has another location on Jerrold Avenue off Highway 101 in San Francisco.

Of the 200 students who have completed the College Track program and who are attending universities across the nation, 60 percent are Latino, 26 percent African American, 5 percent Asian, 5 percent Pacific Islander, 3 percent multiracial and 1 percent Caucasian. By comparison, nationally, 63 percent of all college students are Caucasian, 11 percent African American, 11 percent multi-racial or other, 9 percent Latino and 6 percent Asian-Pacific, according to statistics compiled by the National Education Center for Statistics.

Since 1997, 35 students who have completed College Track have graduated from college. Some students take more than four years to graduate, postponing studies occasionally to help their families or taking light course loads so they can work to help pay for their expenses and tuition.

Students attend College Track for four years, beginning the summer they leave eighth grade. They spend a minimum of nine hours a week in the program, three of them in academic tutoring. They also participate in volunteer activities, leadership training and extracurricular activities.

Each center has a site director, an academic affairs director, a student life director and a college affairs director, along with tutors.

College Track shied away from publicity in its early years, uncertain of its own survival. It has focused on private fundraising so that the organization has flexibility in how it allocates its money, rather than collect federal or corporate grants that dictate how the money is to be spent.

In the Oakland branch of College Track, in an office piled high with stacks of statistics he was compiling for a recent board meeting, Marshall Lott, the chief operating officer, explained why he was intrigued with College Track. He was the first executive director of the organization, a time-consuming role he has since relinquished to Lindo so he can devote more time to his family. A self-described military brat who went to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Lott said he's experienced some of the same challenges that students face today - including low expectations from school counselors who assumed he'd do nothing more than graduate high school, much less go on to earn a graduate degree.

To expand the worldviews of its low-income students, College Track also brings in high-caliber speakers to talk to students about careers they may not have considered. Many aspire to careers as social workers or probation officers because those are the occupations their relatives have. Among those who have addressed students are former President Bill Clinton; California first lady Maria Shriver; Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C.; and Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton.

Omar Butler is director of the year-old San Francisco branch. Initially, only two students applied for the program. In its second year, it has already fielded 22 requests, an increase he attributed to College Track students' personal and enthusiastic testimonials.

"The kids go to the middle schools to talk and rave about our program," he said. "What's to rave about? That it's a safe place with adults who take an interest in your success and students like you who are on real college campuses."

Photos of College Track graduates - now in college, with the name of the school they're attending written in the captions - line the walls.

"The kids need an environment where they know the expectations are very high," said Butler, who worked in probation in the past. "Kids belong to gangs for the camaraderie. Here, they're looking forward to a backpacking trip in August. They're taking a college tour trip next year and saying, 'Hey, we're gonna be on a plane together.' "

All the branches have Apple computers and study rooms with modern tables, lamps, couches and stacks of magazines including Time and Newsweek. It's important, officials believe, for students to become accustomed to studying in an environment that emulates libraries on college campuses. Every night, before the kids go home at 7, they form a "unity circle," to give compliments to their instructors and share information. At the end, staffers often hug the kids.

"There was a discussion as to whether we should hug or not hug," East Palo Alto site director Sharifa Wilson said. The decision was easy, she said, after one of the kids said, "You're the only hug I get."

Passing on lessons learned

On a recent Friday at 4 p.m., students at the East Palo Alto campus came in after school for workshops including essay writing and music studio recording. Among those needing a little extra academic boosting was Eric Guerrero, 16, a junior at Carlmont, who used to skip school regularly, spending days hanging out in the hills above Carlmont with friends, doing "activities that aren't legal," he said.

His brother and sister had been in College Track. He applied as a junior - late in the game - and was accepted. "I seen how my parents looked at them with a sense of pride," he said. "I was always causing problems. My parents had to constantly come to school to meet with administrators, like once a week. I decided I wanted to change so I could do something with my life."

In the Inspire class, it was revealed that Guerrero is quite good at geometry, often assisting classmates with homework. But he couldn't get his mind around the need to be diligent himself, or even to carry a day planner.

"That's what my hand is for," Guerrero said, motioning to notes he writes on his skin.

Likewise, Brenda Gomez, 15, a sophomore at Sequoia High in Redwood City, was struggling with homework. She said she has trouble paying attention in school, and, as a result, didn't know how to do her homework. One of the staffers gave her strategies to help with concentration.

"Before, I really didn't care if I passed classes - I didn't think I was going to college," said Gomez, who wanted to become a dancer, to her parent's dismay.

Because she likes children, she now has her sights set on becoming an obstetrician.

College Track graduate Nora Razon, 23, a senior at San Francisco State University, knows it can be difficult to motivate some Latina students.

Unlike Gomez, she was always gung ho about school and took advance placement courses in English and U.S. history, despite a difficult childhood. Until she was 16, she lived with her parents, a brother and sister in the garage of a three-bedroom East Palo Alto home, along with 20 other people. At 16, she decided to move out and was put in foster care. She wanted to escape the noise at home that made it difficult to study and the expectations of her parents that she'd help with housework at the expense of homework, even when her brother didn't have to.

Today, her mother is divorced and has started working at a womens' cooperative called Emmas, a house-cleaning business. "My mom said, 'I saw you do it, and that's half the reason I left,' " Razon recalled over coffee at Starbucks in the Ravenswood 101 Shopping Center.

Razon, who wants to become a high school teacher, has started a program at Carlmont called Nosotras, or "us" in Spanish. It's a support group to encourage girls to achieve and get along better with other kids at school. She also encourages girls to work together in groups, studying and solving problems, something she learned by watching wealthier white kids at school.

It's uncommon, according to Razon, for Latinos to allow their daughters to meet up with friends outside the home to do schoolwork, to sleep over at someone's house or even play a sport, because those activities are seen as excuses to goof off or get together with boys.

"I learned a lot of kids were more successful than me, not because they were smarter, not because they were white and privileged, but because they worked together," she said. "They had a system. They'd meet after school at Starbucks, and I'd be on the bus back to East Palo Alto. I thought they were cheating. I had to do the work of five people myself." Now, she said, their grades are better and her graduates are going to college.

It's just the sort of giving back to the community that Powell, Lindo, Lott and other College Track officials want for graduates.

The nonprofit's annual fundraiser, held at Pixar Animation Studios each year and slated for June 14, doubles as a showcase for students. Last year, Cruz read a rap poem he wrote about his upbringing. It brought down the house.

*This boy is the first to dream in a dorm
The first to make his mother so proud
He tries to explain to his mother the starchiness of
Dorm food
Or the necessity for midnight Top Ramen
But she is too busy peeling off dead skin from her fingers
They wither from Windex and bleach
His hands are smooth and warm
His hands know only the weight of textbooks
This boy Never thought he'd make it to 21
He just turned 20 about to graduate from Cal*

Cruz, whose \$15,000 in fees, room and board were largely paid for by scholarships, made extra money as a graphic designer while at UC Berkeley. He wants to become an independent filmmaker so he can create "feel-good movies that make people laugh," he said.

Powell has lunch with him periodically and is steering him toward New York University for film school. "She gets right to the facts," he said. "She has no time to mess around. I understood what it's like to be a positive leader from her. I also like her vision of what America is. You have to have a very egalitarian worldview if you're helping students of color go to college and you're the epitome of a white rich woman."

"There's nothing better," Powell said, "than seeing someone with enormous talent reach their potential."

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Times Picayune

Recovery school district superintendent Paul Vallas aims for long-term stability for school system

6.9.08

Sarah Carr

Paul Vallas obsesses over a building.

Repeatedly, he drives to the structure at 643 Magazine St., seeing it as a new, improved Rabouin High School in the fall.

Ellis Lucia/Times-Picayune ArchiveRecover School District Superintendent Paul Vallas, addressing teachers at a 2007 convocation.

His assistants murmur quietly that businesses already occupy the building, which the district doesn't own, that Vallas, in other words, is not thinking entirely logically.

"I'll just get out and look at it myself," Vallas says, swinging his lanky frame from the car for yet another quick tour, leaving onlookers wondering whether he is clairvoyant or mad.

As his first full year at the helm of the Recovery School District comes to a close, Vallas has brought a passion for action. A big talker, big thinker and big doer, he has also thus far proved a big spender. One afternoon, he describes one of his strategies here as "buying momentum."

Whether that momentum morphs into long-term stability remains the question at the core of his tenure -- one he freely admits was never designed to last, as he plans to leave New Orleans, most likely late next year. Some speculate he will run, again, for governor of Illinois, where his family still lives. Vallas neither confirms nor denies.

Whether history ultimately looks kindly on the Vallas tenure hangs on whether he can buck historical trends, here and in other urban districts. Often, stability of leadership has proved a prerequisite for enduring success. Vallas' own stints in Philadelphia and Chicago schools, at least five years each, testify to the point.

By contrast, the constant churning of superintendents has proved disastrous in New Orleans and elsewhere, and casts doubt on whether Vallas' reforms will be embraced -- much less sustained -- by his successor.

Vallas argues that quickly installed reforms can indeed have lasting effects, even after a superintendent leaves.

But Cheryllyn Branche, the principal of Bannecker Elementary School, wonders about sustainability.

"If we don't have people who have a commitment to this place in the long term, it won't come back," Branche said. "Sometimes I want to ask him, 'What happens when you are gone?' "

--- Powerful mandate ---

Vallas differs from any previous superintendent, here or nationally, in one key way: an unprecedented level of relatively unchecked power.

He doesn't report to the local elected School Board -- one with a history of blocking superintendents' reform attempts, excoriating them publicly and ousting them. Neither does Vallas have to contend with a teachers union, which lost collective bargaining rights in the state takeover. The flood and takeover further shattered central office fiefdoms run by entrenched bureaucrats.

Vallas reports directly to state Superintendent Paul Pastorek. "I like to pretend that I have all these obstacles," Vallas said. But he concedes that his office faces fewer constraints "than any district in the country."

Vallas talks every day to Pastorek. Having hitched their wagons together -- and to progress in the Recovery District over the next two years -- the two leaders often champion each other publicly.

"We needed a steroid injection of human capital, and we also needed a steroid injection of credibility," Pastorek said. "All you had to do was say 'Paul Vallas,' and instantly there was credibility."

Many credit Vallas with taking full advantage of his benevolent-dictator status, putting considerable energy, national connections and public and private money into New Orleans schools. He has unleashed a litany of new initiatives, many mirroring those he employed in other cities: high-tech classroom equipment, family centers in all schools, an extended school day and year, an overhaul of high schools.

Those initiatives appear to be paying off, at least in across-the-board gains on the LEAP test this year when, for the first time, improvement in New Orleans outpaced the state.

Vallas attributes the quick success in part to the freedom he enjoys.

"You can come and, with no restraint on who you hire and no institutional obstacles blocking you, change the whole curriculum, the length of the school day, length of the school year," he said.

The state-run Recovery District operates 33 schools that were low-performing before the state takeover and oversees 26 charter schools.

Some education activists contend Vallas' truncated tenure may not be a bad thing, and they credit him for making his intentions clear.

"I don't think Vallas comes into a situation and sees how much money he has and what he needs to do. I think he comes in and sees what he needs to do and then he does it," said Brian Riedlinger, the outgoing chief executive officer of the Algiers Charter Schools Association and a longtime administrator in New Orleans public schools.

Added Karran Harper Royal, an education activist: "He knows he has to make some things happen pretty quickly."

--- Modernizing classrooms ---

Famously impatient, Vallas wants it all and he wants it now.

The first year of the Recovery School District, with Vallas' predecessor Robin Jarvis at the helm, was defined largely by what schools and students lacked: enough teachers or buildings, hot lunches, social workers, textbooks, sanitary bathrooms.

Vallas has largely eliminated such fundamental problems. Schools opened on time. An influx of new teachers arrived, many from programs such as Teach for America and Teach NOLA, programs that veteran educators criticize for throwing untrained teachers into challenging classrooms.

Educators and activists say one of the main challenges of Vallas' second year will be to solidify the efforts he has launched. Several teachers and principals pointed out, for instance, that the technology had mixed results: While Vallas put high-tech, interactive chalkboards throughout the district, some teachers still have not received adequate training to use them and some schools lacked Internet wiring.

Vallas said that by December, 75 percent of the classrooms were fully wired. And in a thinly veiled swipe at more skeptical members of the veteran teaching corps, he added, "How come none of our new teachers are complaining about training?"

--- Show him the money ---

One morning, Vallas started his day, like many others, with two meetings. He bantered easily with visiting groups pitching him different services.

When a representative from Upward Bound, which helps prepare low-income students for college, pointed out the organization is federally financed, Vallas sat up straighter.

"Great," he said. "Do you have enough money for all my high schools?"

A few minutes later, a group from Education Partnerships Inc. walked in. "Did you bring money with you?" Vallas jokingly asked the group, which sets up collaborations between schools and businesses.

Vallas said he likes the foundation's mission. And he likes the fact that Education Partnerships doesn't come begging.

--- National clout helps ---

The consummate salesman, Vallas left the meeting by giving the groups the impression he was doing them the favor, letting them bring their programs -- and money -- to the district.

"With some of our national donors, it tipped the scale that he was choosing to come," said Sarah Usdin, president of New Schools for New Orleans, which provides support to new charter schools and has worked closely with the Recovery District.

Perhaps the biggest rap on Vallas, however, is that he moves so fast that he's prone to launching half-cocked projects and overspending. In Philadelphia, that came in the form of a more than \$70 million deficit Vallas' critics contend stemmed from overspending and lackluster oversight. Vallas said the impact of the deficit has been exaggerated.

The Recovery School District has experienced cash-flow problems throughout the school year. Vendors have complained of late payments. Critics have quietly complained about the millions of dollars in contracts going to outside consultants and companies Vallas has worked with in the past.

Vallas and Pastorek steadfastly dispute any suggestion that problems result from overspending. Pastorek argues that more attention should be paid to how far Vallas' team has come in creating a budget, virtually from scratch and with no cash

reserves, while waiting months to get reimbursed by FEMA for expenses that were crucial to getting schools running.

--- Successor in place ---

In the end, concerns over spending and cash flow in Vallas' first year may prove insignificant. Who can criticize, really, if his brazenness actually helps children ill-served by their neighborhood schools for decades before the floods destroyed them?

Vallas said he's already working on building a leadership team to take his place, citing Chief of Staff Kelvin Adams, a veteran New Orleans principal and administrator, as his top choice for a successor.

Without doubt, his successor will have less in the form of the one-time money, national connections and worldwide attention that have aided Vallas. And if Vallas' tenure is a sprint, his successors' will be the marathon, grinding through the long haul with resources depleted in part by the early sprint.

--- Nonstop action ---

After lunch one afternoon, Vallas busily made plans to redesign the district's high schools.

He asked for the time of the next meeting at John McDonogh High, checked the status of a partnership with a group at Reed High, tried to line up a commandant for a military high school, and asked his assistant to get Tracie Washington, a community activist, on the line.

When the conversation ended, Washington said, "From your mouth to God's ear."

"I'm not that close," Vallas quipped back.

It's not for lack of trying.

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Washington Post
Fate of D.C. voucher program darkens
6.9.08

Valerie Strauss and Bill Turque

The groundbreaking federal voucher program that enables nearly 2,000 D.C. children to attend private schools is facing an uncertain future in the Democrat-controlled Congress and may well be heading into its final year of operation, according to officials and supporters of the program.

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) said this week that she is working on a plan to phase out the controversial D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, the first in the country to provide federal money for vouchers. Norton said she wants to proceed in a way that will not harm recipients. But she added that she regarded the program, narrowly approved in 2004 for five years by the then-Republican majority, as on its last legs.

"We have to protect the children, who are the truly innocent victims here," said Norton, who like many Democrats opposes vouchers as a threat to public school systems. "But I can tell you that the Democratic Congress is not about to extend this program."

Most Democrats have traditionally opposed vouchers as a threat to the stability of public schools. The possible demise of the D.C. program is one more sign of the new directions K-12 education reform might soon take as a result of the 2008 election. Congressional Democrats have promised to overhaul -- if not eliminate -- President Bush's signature No Child Left Behind law. And next year, a new administration, one headed by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) or Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), is certain to bring its own ideas to the table.

Changes in District politics have also compromised the future of the aid program, which awards scholarships of up to \$7,500 a year to low-income children for tuition and other fees at participating private schools. Early champions of the initiative -- former mayor Anthony A. Williams (D), former D.C. Council member Kevin P. Chavous (D) and former D.C. Board of Education president Peggy Cooper Cafritz -- have all left office.

Williams's successor, Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D), who is focused on an attempt to transform D.C. public schools, has not opposed continuation of the scholarships but has been far less robust in his support. When Williams endorsed the measure, Fenty, then on the D.C. Council, accused him of abandoning home rule.

"He sold out cheap," Fenty said then.

Fenty's office did not return a phone call seeking comment.

Scholarship supporters have appealed to Rep. Jose E. Serrano (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that will take up the issue later this month. President Bush's budget includes \$74 million to boost education in the District, with money divided among D.C. schools, public charter schools and the scholarship program, which is slated to receive \$18 million. But with Norton opposed and Democrats headed into an election cycle, advocates say the scholarships face a tough road.

"There is a lot of Democratic Party politics at play this year," said Chavous, an outspoken advocate for school choice. "The party doesn't want anything in place where public money is utilized to support children in private schools."

Williams said in an interview Friday that there was "no question" the program was in jeopardy but added that he was confident Fenty would work to protect it.

In a statement Friday, Serrano, a member of the House Appropriations Committee and chairman of the subcommittee on financial services and general government, was reluctant to get between Norton and other D.C. Democrats. "My hope is that we will work out a solution that will have the broadest possible support," he said.

"I do not wish to inject myself and my opinions into D.C. issues . . . D.C. does not need a second mayor."

Joseph E. Robert Jr., chairman of the board of the nonprofit Washington Scholarship Fund, which administers the program, was unavailable to comment. According to fund executive director Greg Cork, there were 1,903 K-12 students using about \$12 million in scholarship funds at 54 D.C. private schools at the start of the 2007-08 school year. The average income among those participating families is \$22,736, or about 107 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of four.

Creation of the fund in 2004 put the District at the forefront of the school-choice movement. At that time, the Republican-led federal government was taking steps to use the nation's capital -- with its ailing public school system -- as a showcase for educational reforms, which also included the country's most sweeping charter school law.

Parents of scholarship recipients offer high praise for the program, crediting it with changing the direction of their children's lives. Patricia William, whose son Fransoir, 11, is a sixth-grader at Sacred Heart, a Catholic school in Northwest, said his growth has been striking.

"He's been developed in many ways, intellectually, emotionally and in his values," she said. "I couldn't ask for anything better."

Wendy Cunningham said her daughter Jordan, who will be a senior, has thrived since entering Georgetown Day School two years ago and has had access to opportunities that likely would not be available otherwise. This summer, Cunningham said, Jordan will enter summer programs at Catholic University and San Francisco State.

"Other people should have the same opportunity and choices," said Cunningham, who supplements the voucher money with other funds to make the school's \$26,000 tuition.

The program has also drawn criticism. A 2007 Government Accountability Office study found that some participating private schools lacked proper permits to operate. It has also been faulted for allowing ineligible families to receive federal funds and for failing to ensure that families selected accredited schools.

Cork said in e-mails that fund officials followed the rules and that the ultimate decision about where to attend was up to the families.

Opponents said they thought the program blurred the separation of church and state because more than half of the students have enrolled in religious schools, most of them Catholic. One reason, proponents said, is the prohibitive expense of many secular private schools.

Norton said she has warned fund officials that the program would be killed by Congress and that it was important to start telling families that the vouchers would not be continued indefinitely.

She also said she has in the past week met with families receiving scholarships and learned that many of them were unaware of the funding situation.

"They looked completely befuddled," she said.

Education Week
Candidates at odds over K-12
6.9.08

Alyson Klein and David J. Hoff

Brief Summary: As the presidential primary season ended last week, presumptive nominees Senators John McCain and Barack Obama appear to agree on the basics of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) but have contrasting views on K-12 policy. McCain and Obama have both expressed support for NCLB's goals and measuring schools' successes through testing. But McCain, according to the article, "would promote market forces as a way to spur school improvement, and would likely seek to freeze education spending as part of a review of the effectiveness of federal programs." Obama, on the other hand, "promises to search for new ways of assessing students and to invest significantly in efforts to improve teacher quality."

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Los Angeles Times
Asian Americans' academic success misleading, report says
6.10.08

Gale Holland

The success of some Asian American and Pacific Islander college students has given rise to a myth of the "model minority" that obscures important differences within a diverse population whose educational needs are often neglected, according to a report released Monday.

The concentration of Asian American students in a relatively small number of elite universities, including UCLA and UC Berkeley, has raised fears of a "takeover" of the upper tiers of higher education in the U.S., according to the report, a collaboration between a national commission, research institutes at New York University and the College Board. In reality, more than half of Asian American students attend community colleges or minimally selective four-year colleges, the report stated.

Many of the students come from low-income families with limited English language skills, and vary widely in test scores and other educational benchmarks, the report found. Their increased participation in higher education closely tracks that of Latino and African American students, as racial and other barriers have fallen in the last few decades, the report said.

"We are not an ethnic group every one of which has just graduated from Harvard," said Rep. David Wu (D-Ore.), speaking at a Washington, D.C., news conference to announce the report.

There "are two populations . . . one high-income and high-education attainment, and then a second group, equally important, that is low-income and low-education attainment," Wu said. "The [first group] has completely overshadowed the existence of the other group of folks."

Many Asian American students do excel in higher education, particularly in California, where they make up roughly 40% of admissions to the flagship Los Angeles and Northern California UC campuses, UCLA education professor Mitchell Chang said.

Fueling the success has been U.S. immigration policy, which has favored entrance for highly educated and trained elites from Asia and Europe, the report stated, noting that those immigrants tend to push their children into advanced degrees and professions.

As of 2000, 44.1% of Asian Americans had obtained college degrees, according to the report. The average in the United States is 24.4%, the report stated.

But many Asian groups in the U.S. fell far short of those achievement levels. Almost 60% of Hmong -- from southern China and Southeast Asia -- that same year had less than a high school education, according to the report.

Pacific Islanders fared poorly. Only 15% of Native Hawaiians, for example, had college degrees.

Chang said the lower income groups do not have the stellar high school preparation or other advantages of the more affluent ones.

The majority of Asian American students at UCLA are from low-income families, Chang said. Their choice of colleges is between UCLA and the Cal State system, not pricey private schools, he said.

They often feel "tremendous pressure" to fit the model minority stereotype, continuing to struggle, for example, in science or math programs when they would be better suited to other areas of study.

"They end up having to drop out, or don't do well enough to get into medical school," Chang said.

"For the general public, there's an idea these Asians are pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, but they're often struggling in ways very similar to other groups," he said. "We shouldn't assume they're all going to do well for some magical or mystical reasons."

Chang and Don Nakanishi, director of UCLA's Asian American Studies Center, conducted a study last year that paralleled some of the findings of the new report. Nakanishi said he hoped that the new study, by directly attacking common myths, would dispel the misrepresentation of the Asian American experience in higher education.

"All the kids aren't from suburban high schools," he said. "They do have some special needs that come from the kinds of backgrounds they come from."

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Los Angeles Times
Survey gives L.A. charter schools higher marks
6.10.08

Mitchell Landsberg

It's the \$64,000 question of public education: Are charter schools better than their traditional public school counterparts?

A report to be released today from the California Charter Schools Assn. takes a crack at it, comparing charter schools in Los Angeles with their traditional peers. Its conclusion is that charters generally perform better academically than nearby regular public schools, and that charters improve as they age.

As is often the case with education statistics, it's not quite that simple. A majority of the regular schools surveyed actually did better in one batch of test scores than the nearest comparable charter school and improved more from 2006 to 2007.

But by most measures, charters had the edge.

"It's pretty significant that seven out of 10 charters actually outperform their most similarly matched district public school," said Caprice Young, chief executive of the charter schools association, citing one finding in the report. She said the study was intended to answer the question parents are most likely to ask: How does their local charter school stack up against the nearest comparable regular schools?

It found that charter schools did especially well in educating African American students and that charters show some of their strongest success in middle schools, whose traditional counterparts have been stubbornly resistant to progress.

The differences between charters and regular public schools were smallest in the elementary grades, where the Los Angeles Unified School District has sharply improved achievement in recent years.

The study found that charters, on average, were improving their test scores at a faster clip than traditional schools. However, it also found a big difference in achievement between "mature" charters -- at least 6 years old -- and those more recently established. The older charters scored significantly higher, leading the association to call for patience in judging young charter schools.

Ramon C. Cortines, L.A. Unified's newly appointed senior deputy superintendent, said the report pointed to how traditional schools could learn from charters -- a strikingly different attitude from that typically expressed by district officials.

"I think that what it says is that they have some best practices, and those should be replicated in the district in all schools," he said. "I would say the same about islands of excellence in the Unified district. . . . We need to each learn from each other."

He said the district Monday held the first in a series of meetings that will bring together principals from charters and traditional schools to discuss how they can learn from one another.

The study is sure to trigger debate about how to determine which schools are comparable -- or whether that is even possible.

Charters are public schools that are given partial or nearly full independence from a school district in exchange for improving academic performance. They mostly are authorized by a school district but are typically run by a private, nonprofit organization. Los Angeles has more charters than any city in the country, with 125 schools, mostly small campuses in low-income neighborhoods, serving roughly 40,000 students.

For the report, the charter association compared each charter in Los Angeles with three regular public schools within a five-mile radius that had similar demographics, in particular a similar racial breakdown.

For instance, it compared the Bright Star Secondary Academy, with 89 students, with three large, comprehensive high schools: Manual Arts, Crenshaw and Los Angeles. Bright Star scored more than 200 points higher than the average Academic Performance Index of the three schools, the biggest difference in the city.

Jeannie Oakes, a professor of education at UCLA, said that though she had not read the report, the comparison struck her as flawed, in part because of the difference in size between most charters and nearby traditional public schools, and because charters might attract more motivated students. She said a similar national report by Caroline Hoxby of Harvard University several years ago was criticized for "selection bias."

Oakes said it would be more valid to compare charters with magnet schools, which students choose to attend, rather than being assigned. "Then you're controlling for the pluck or the gumption in the family, the ability to navigate the system," she said.

Priscilla Wohlstetter, a professor of education at USC who specializes in charter school governance, said the report was a "good effort," but added that she would like to see the comparison based on "something more than test scores." Wohlstetter, who has an affiliation with the charter school association, recently released her own report about the performance of California charter schools, looking at a variety of measures, including financial stability and teacher-pupil ratios.

It also found that charters outperformed traditional public schools in key areas, but fell short in others.

One area where charters lagged, Wohlstetter's report noted, was the performance of students not fluent in English. That was an area of mixed results in the charter school association report, where regular district schools did better overall and in the elementary grades, but not in middle or high schools.

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Wall Street Journal Learning (and succeeding) on Jump Street 6.10.08

Gary Fields

WASHINGTON -- As a middle-school student in Ward 8, one of the tougher areas of the nation's capital, Elisabeth Robinson did badly at school on purpose to keep out of fights. "Anything you do could get you jumped -- could get you shot up," she said. Her solution was "to dumb down who I was."

Thurgood Marshall Academy

Every member of Thurgood Marshall Academy's first four classes has gone to college.

Now, the high-school junior is facing a different kind of peer pressure at Thurgood Marshall Academy. In a neighborhood that produces about 30% of the city's homicide victims, with the city's lowest high-school graduation rate, every member

of the school's first four classes has gone on to college. No one wants to be the first to fail.

"College is an expectation here, not a choice," Ms. Robinson says.

The seven-year-old charter school, named for the first African-American Supreme Court justice, is one of several programs east of the Anacostia River that are designed to break the pattern of violence in this impoverished section of the city. TMA -- as it is known -- has innovative programs, such as the self-assessments that students must do, as well as software that gives teachers a near-instantaneous look at students' learning. But the school's success isn't built on cutting-edge pedagogy but on an old-fashioned concept: high expectations.

From the uniforms the students are required to wear to the lack of a metal detector to the college banners that hang from the walls, the atmosphere is built around expecting the students to adhere to the rules and do well. The hours-long classes, extracurricular activities and vigorous evaluations simply support those expectations.

There is also another powerful force: the incentive to do well when the alternative couldn't be clearer in crumbling and crime-ridden neighborhoods.

"Education is seen as liberation," says John Diamond, associate professor at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. That, combined with committed teachers, involved parents and wide-ranging activities that extend the school day, creates successes at TMA, he says.

As a result, TMA scores third-highest in tests of all city high schools with open enrollments. It may also show a potential solution for cities across America that face a rise in violent crime. Recently in Washington, seven people were killed in one nine-hour stretch, a dramatic crime spree after years of declining murder rates.

"Let's face it, most people, whether valid or not, operate on the assumption that if you come from a publicly subsidized housing project or any of the low-income neighborhoods, you're more likely than not to end up in the not-so-successful columns," says Albert Herring, executive assistant U.S. attorney for external affairs in the District of Columbia. What TMA shows is that "intellectual limits should not be placed on the students because of their ZIP Codes."

In Ward 8, the neighborhood outside Thurgood Marshall is bustling. Several young men loiter on a nearby sidewalk. A two-door sedan makes a U-turn and pulls to a stop nearby and the motorist starts cursing the group.

Although any student in the city can apply to the public charter school, 93% of the 365 students at the school come from Wards 7 and 8, where residents have an average per-capita annual income of about \$14,000, the lowest in the city, according to a study conducted for the D.C. Office of Planning/State Data Center. Seventy percent of the students during the school year 2006-2007 qualified for free or reduced-cost lunches.

There is no metal detector, atypical for most schools and government buildings in Washington. The students, both the boys and the girls, dress in tan slacks and white or maroon shirts with the school name on them. They move quietly from class to class beneath triangular college banners that fill the halls. "No brainer" signs, reminders of the code of behavior, are placed intermittently in the halls as well. No eating outside the cafeteria, no grooming in class, no profanity, no gum chewing.

Everything at TMA is geared toward college, from the banners, to university prospectuses found in many rooms to lessons that walk students through the application process. Students in all grades participate in college-prep classes and activities.

In physics, students look on intently as a teacher uses a door knob to explain the principle of torque and rotational forces. One classmate explains energy and acceleration using the flight of a football.

Thursday is graduation. As the day approaches, students prepare their portfolios -- self-assessments that track their academic performance and personal behavior. They must stand before faculty, staff, parents, fellow students and administrators and make their formal presentations about how they did in class and progressed socially. The skills required are the same that they will use later in college and job interviews.

Executive Director Joshua Kern founded TMA in 2002 while attending Georgetown University Law School. At the time, he says, he was teaching at a nearby high school and concluded it was impossible to ask students to learn in a violent environment where they lacked educational materials, like books.

Today, attendance is about 95% and more than one-third of the students have perfect attendance for the school year. After passing a round of interviews, incoming students spend five weeks at the school the summer before they enter. Classes run from 8:45 a.m. until 3:40 p.m., with some variations, and with tutoring and after-school work the day usually extends to 6 p.m.

"I think the school takes over our lives," says Christian Yanez, 17 years old, one of the students graduating this week, as he explains the school's success. "We don't have time to do the things that could lead to negative activities," he adds. "There are all kinds of extracurricular activities for the kids who don't like to go home after school."

Admission isn't based on academic criteria. Many of the students have to take remedial instruction, but they have ample opportunity to get up to speed, Mr. Kern says. The school has an assessment system, through tests that are administered regularly, which gives teachers an immediate look at whether students understand the lessons.

The school also has an alumni coordinator who keeps track of graduates, making sure they are aware of financial aid and other funding that can make college more of a possibility. Parents who need help with their taxes can come to the school for sessions that include local accountants. "Our kids can't get financial aid unless their parents file taxes," Mr. Kern says.

Ms. Robinson, the 16-year-old junior, is the second member of her family to graduate from the school. Her brother was in the first class and is now in college majoring in computer programming. She wants to attend Harvard Law. "I know I want to think about sociology undergraduate, to help others," she says.

Her day here begins at 7:45 a.m., about an hour before school opens. She comes to get extra work in on her classes. She leaves about 6 p.m. every day. In addition to the classes, she participates in a program put on by the Anti-Defamation League, as well as the band and drama clubs. She works evenings at the D.C. Rape Crisis Center and she visits schools, churches and recreation centers talking to other young

people about teen-dating violence.

When she was preparing to choose a high school, her mother looked at schools in the area and they seemed troubled. Altercations began with little provocation. "If you wore something somebody didn't like, you could end up fighting," Ms. Robinson says. The final straw was when her brother, then in junior high, came home, having been beaten up by students from one of the local schools.

Now, although sirens and ambulances are commonplace in her neighborhood, as are assaults and shootings, she can be herself at school and no longer hide her achievements and aspirations, she says. "Here, college is not even a question."

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Los Angeles Times

Students likely to fail high school exit exam can be identified as early as 4th grade, study says **6.11.08**

Seema Mehta

As early as fourth grade, students who will be at risk of failing the high school exit exam -- a state requirement to earn a diploma -- can be identified based on grades, classroom behavior and test scores, according to a new study released Tuesday.

The findings, based on an extensive study of student achievement in San Diego schools, call into question the effectiveness of aiming significant efforts and tens of millions of dollars at struggling high school seniors and older students to help them pass the exam.

"From a political standpoint, such spending seems necessary. However, our results strongly suggest that these 11th-hour interventions by themselves are unlikely to yield the intended results," according to the report by the Public Policy Institute of California.

Instead, the authors suggested, "moving a portion of these tutoring dollars to struggling students in earlier grades -- when the students are still in school -- could be a wise choice. An ounce of prevention could indeed be worth a pound of cure."

Assemblyman Pedro Nava (D-Santa Barbara), who wrote legislation that provides more than \$72 million annually for two years to tutor seniors who couldn't pass the exam, said it would be unfair to reduce support for older students to pay for increased support for younger ones.

"I suppose they should sit down with the parents of these kids who are looking at failing the [exit] exam and persuade these parents that they don't need the money," Nava said. "Inherent in the conclusion of the report is that education needs help at all levels. We shouldn't be put in a position where we are pitting the outcomes of seniors against the future of preschoolers. That makes no sense."

State Supt. of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell said school districts ought to have greater flexibility in how they spend such funds.

"We need to have comprehensive intervention and not wait till 12th grade," he said.

Additionally, he said, the study underscored the need for universal preschool, as well as expanding the state's class-size reduction efforts.

The exit exam was created by state legislators in an effort to standardize the achievement of high school graduates across the state's 1,053 school districts. Students in the class of 2006 were the first who were required to pass the exam to receive diplomas.

From their sophomore through senior years, students have six chances to take the exam, which includes math and English. Students must score at least 55% on the math portion, which is eighth-grade level, and 60% on the English part, which is ninth- or 10th-grade level. More than 93% of students pass the exam by the end of their senior year.

Educators said the study results are buttressed by earlier research that shows early academic achievement, the mastering of basic math skills and reading comprehension, is a building block for future success.

"We've recognized for a long time that performance in the earlier grades is one of the best indicators of success later in school and in life," said Chris Eftychiou, spokesman for the Long Beach Unified School District.

At Pasadena High School, guidance counselor Allison Steppes said she worried that social promotion and lack of parental involvement led to some students passing through elementary schools without mastering basic skills.

"I don't think we're doing enough at the elementary stages because it's ridiculous to get to 12th grade, take the [exit exam] six times and still not pass it," she said.

But she questioned the validity of a student retaking the test after failing it half a dozen times. Steppes said she advised students who repeatedly failed the exam but finished 12th grade to get their high school degree at a community college, which does not require students to pass the exam.

"I want the student to move on with life," she said.

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Education Week

Chicago district focusing on pathways to college

6.11.08

Christina A. Samuels

Brief Summary: Many high school seniors plan to attend college when they graduate, and often times these plans do not match reality. Some find out they are not a good candidate because they do not have the academic foundation to be admitted to many colleges. Others are held back due to issues with financial aid, problems with essay composition or choosing only one college. The Chicago school district has taken a comprehensive approach to remove many roadblocks through its postsecondary education and student development department.

Education Week is a paid subscription publication. Please visit www.edweek.org to access the article.

Andover Townsman (MA)**Editorial: Money will be needed for extending school day
6.12.08**

Adding one hour and 40 minutes to each school day would be a radical change to the high performing Andover Public School System. It's possible extending the school day represents the future of American education. But there are a number of questions that need to be answered, not the least of which is a very practical one: whether and how the town can afford to pay for the idea long-term. Teachers will be looking for more money for the additional work.

Six Andover schools — its elementary schools, Shawsheen School and Wood Hill Middle School — were given \$11,000 this school year by the state to begin studying the idea of extended learning time in Andover. Wood Hill Middle and High Plain Elementary may submit a preliminary plan by July 31 that would keep them on track to add to the school day starting in the fall of 2009. The other four schools say they will take at least another year before coming up with any plan — if they create a plan at all.

It's logical that schools take time to discuss the significant idea before taking any action, given parental concerns, changes in principals and a desire for much more specific information.

While the state offers one-year grants, it's unclear in today's economy how long that state money will be available to a relatively affluent community such as Andover. Andover always needs to be wary of adding programs that it cannot sustain. For much of this school year, the school administration said it did not believe it could continue to pay for reasonable class sizes at the elementary schools or athletic teams at Andover High School. It's unlikely taxpayers would support the type of override necessary to pay for an extended school day.

Questions about how the extra hours would be used must also be answered. As the proposal stands, teachers can opt out of doing the additional work, the superintendent told our education reporter. How would the time be filled then, and would this offer something better than the extra-curricular activities students are involved in now?

Extended Learning Time committees at each of the schools have been working hard to answer questions and explain the positives and negatives of an extended school day. Over the coming months it will be critical for continued open communication with parents and the community at large so that the school communities and Andover itself can decide what is the best solution. At the least, all of this discussion should lead each school to best use the educational time it has now. Extending the school day needs to have obvious educational benefits for the idea to be pursued. But the town also has to be able to afford it. An explanation from the school system of how it could pay for the idea long-term is a necessary early step.

Andover Townsman (MA)**Longer school day: Expanded learning time pros and cons**

6.12.08

Bethany Bray

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

More time to cover the curriculum.

"I'm always hearing from teachers that there's not enough time," Superintendent Claudia Bach said. "We really need more time to do the academic things, not just extra curricular."

The extra time allotted with ELT would allow teachers to expand current lessons, introduce special projects, provide new enrichment and have time for more teacher workshops and development, supporters say.

"If you look at the curriculum, you say, 'Oh my gosh, how can a teacher possibly get this done?' ELT will allow us to do so much more, for all our kids," said Brad Heim, a High Plain Elementary parent. "There's always room for improvement, and we have the luxury of being out front and being able to decide how we want to do it."

Provide students global, 21st century skills.

"Andover's looking at 21st century skills like cultural awareness, communication skills. For Andover, it's making education all it can be ... The big vision is that the world is changing, education is changing, and how can the schools meet the needs of the children and society?" said Lisa Glickstein, grant coordinator for the district. "Kids are doing reading and math that we didn't do at their age."

But Glickstein added, "Parents are justifiably concerned ... We're still figuring out if this grant program is right for Andover."

State money is growing.

Although ELT grants guarantee money for only one year, school districts can reapply year after year, and preference is given to districts that have ELT programs, Glickstein said.

ELT funding has increased substantially in the three years it's been offered by the state, Heim said. What started as \$500,000 has increased to \$13 million this year, and Gov. Deval Patrick and Sen. Edward Kennedy are in favor of ELT, he said.

"With such tremendous support from our Legislature, even in these economic time, (ELT funding) is being increased," Heim said. "It's being funded because it works."

Lift Andover students to be on par with students around the world.

In a recent Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, American 12th-graders came in dead last among industrialized nations, Bach said.

Flexibility in approach.

Potentially, students could count private lessons and enrichment programs done at home toward the extra hour and 40 minutes in an expanded school day.

"Each school would have to make their own plan" involving parents, said Bach, but the model would allow a student taking an hourlong piano lesson at 7 p.m. to opt-out of an hour earlier in the extended school day.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

If it ain't broke, why fix it?

Andover is already one of the top districts in the state. In the past, ELT grants have helped underperforming districts such as Boston and Worcester with low state test scores and high dropout rates, problems Andover does not have.

Only one year of funding guaranteed.

"As the political atmosphere changes, there's no promise of long-term funding," said Karen Lu, a High Plain Elementary parent. "Realistically, we cannot support this kind of budget long term, and it's almost practically a certainty that funding would be dropped eventually."

Lisa Glickstein, grant coordinator for Andover, said, "It is a legitimate concern that the grant will go away. There really is no way that the town budget would be able to support that amount of time in a long-term way."

Takes time away from families.

Bancroft Elementary mother Dawn Kalinowski, who also teaches at Pentucket Regional High School, believes ELT could eliminate the positive effect of parental involvement.

"We may be taking away the very thing that makes Andover such a great district," she said.

She switched careers from engineering to teaching to have more time with her kids. Being able to put her kids on the bus in the morning is priceless, she said.

Also, Andover parents, including herself, provide very specific extracurricular activities and lessons tailored to their children. School districts can't provide something each youth likes.

No specific goal or concrete plan.

If there were a specific problem for ELT to address, such as improving fourth-grade math, said Caroline Ren Jackson, a Bancroft parent, the initiative would make more sense for Andover.

"So far, it's very hypothetical. Everyone would love to see a foreign language added, see the curriculum improved or have piano lessons paid for by the school system. But how do you determine what is best for the majority of Andover?" she said.

The Philadelphia Daily News
Longer school days? Teachers say 'not one more minute'
6.12.08

Mensah H. Dean

The city teachers' union is balking at a school district proposal that teachers and other school employees work longer days starting this fall.

"My members were very clear in that they said to us: Not one more minute. They believe - and I believe as well - that a longer day is not necessarily a better day for children," said Jerry Jordan, president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, during an interview last night.

During a general-membership meeting at Temple University's Liacouras Center, Jordan updated his members about progress in contract talks between the union and the district.

The talks, which began in February, are geared toward the creation of a contract to replace the one that expires Aug. 31.

Jordan said the district wants his members to work between 15 to 30 extra minutes per day, depending on their job classification.

Because many school buildings are old and lack air conditioning and properly functioning boilers, Jordan said, teachers do not want to stay longer than they have to.

Furthermore, he said, if the extra time is not spent on subjects that students currently get too little of, such as art and music, the kids will likely tune out.

"We don't comment on labor negotiations," Fernando Gallard, a district spokesman, said last night.

Jordan said the district has yet to make any proposals regarding raises or benefits for his 16,000 members, who also include school secretaries, classroom aides, bus attendants, nurses and librarians.

"The members were concerned about that," Jordan said. What does it mean?"

Last month, the district's governing School Reform Commission approved a \$2.3 billion operating budget for 2008-09 that did not include raises for any employees.*

The Meridian Star
Department of education adopts new method of determining dropout rate
6.12.08

Mississippi Department of Education officials say the state's dropout rate is 15.9 percent, when counted with what they consider a more accurate system for tracking graduates.

State Superintendent Hank Bounds released the figures for the class of 2007 on Wednesday showing the state's graduation rate is 73.8 percent. Mississippi is now calculating graduation and dropout rates with the National Governors Association method, which tracks students from the time they begin ninth grade to the time they finish, regardless of whether it takes longer than four years. It also accounts for students who move out of the state.

Mississippi is one of only 17 states already using the National Governors Association method to calculate graduation and dropout rates. The National Governors Association endorsed this method through a compact signed by the governors of all 50 states in 2005. U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings recently announced the U.S. Department of Education would build on the work of the National Governors Association to establish a uniform graduation rate that shows how many incoming freshmen in a given high school graduate within four years.

Bounds said the state had 187 more students graduating in 2007 than 2006, when comparing the years with the new counting method. The trend lines show that we are making improvement in our graduation and dropout rates, Bounds said in a news release. Our dropout prevention initiatives that began in 2008 have us on track to meet our goal of reducing the dropout rate by 50 percent in the next five to seven years. The slight uptick in graduation rates from the year before we even began our dropout prevention focus gives us a good starting place.

The state's prevention initiatives include an advertising campaign, summits for teens, business and community leaders, and a school redesign project to better prepare students for the work force.

The redesign project calls for new courses, equipment, teacher training and career pathways that students in grades 10 through 12 can select. It's already going in 14 districts and will be expanded to 19 more this fall.

Bounds said online courses, flexible classroom hours and more study options that include dual college credit are among the components he believes will reduce the dropout rate.

The Mississippi Department of Education's statewide Dropout Prevention initiatives include:

- On the Bus branding campaign, including television ads, radio spots, billboards and a Web site. A \$1.5 million grant from State Farm Insurance Companies funded the campaign. Dropout Prevention Summits, including one for teens and one for education, business and community leaders, were held earlier this year to identify and implement localized dropout prevention initiatives.
- Business Donations, including a \$100,000 grant from Nissan North America to 10 central Mississippi school districts to help fund their local dropout prevention plans and a custom-designed guitar from Peavey Electronics in honor of the "On the Bus" campaign, with proceeds from each guitar going to the Afterschool Alliance of Mississippi.
- Redesigning Education for the 21st Century Workforce in Mississippi, which was piloted in 14 school districts during the 2007-2008 school year and will be expanded to an additional 19 school districts during the 2008-2009 school year. The original 14 pilot sites will continue implementing the program.

There are many local initiatives underway to help keep students in school through graduation. Local district dropout prevention plans, which were developed and submitted to the Mississippi Board of Education this Spring, will begin the implementation phase of those plans in the 2008-2009 school year.

"When Mississippi education succeeds, Mississippi businesses succeed and Mississippi's quality of life improves," said Blake Wilson, president, Mississippi Economic Council. "Mississippi businesses must have a quality workforce to prosper and thrive."

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Cherokee Chronicle Times Positive Youth Development and 4-H Get Results 6.12.08

You may assume that adolescents are inherently "at risk" and try to "fix" their problems. Or you may take another perspective --- positive youth development -- believing that youth have assets and can become constructive contributors to society. That's the perspective of ISU Extension 4-H Youth Development. A new national study confirms that positive youth development and 4-H get better results.

The Tufts' 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development has found that youth involved in high-quality, structured programs during out-of-school-time, such as those offered by ISU Extension 4-H Youth Development in every county in Iowa, are more likely to experience positive youth development.

"This study confirms that youth involved in 4-H are leaders, contribute to their communities and are civically engaged, which strengthens communities," said Keli Tallman, an ISU Extension 4-H youth development state specialist.

The Tufts' study is a first-of-its-kind, longitudinal study measuring the impact personal and social factors have on youth as they develop. Findings reveal that all youth have the capacity to thrive, regardless of where they live, their family situations, their socioeconomic status, races and genders.

Study findings also show that quality and quantity matter when it comes to youth involvement in structured, out-of-school-time programs, Tallman said. The more often youth are involved in high-quality youth development programs, the more they and their communities benefit.

"We're excited about this research and will be applying what we learn to Iowa 4-H," said Chuck Morris, director of ISU Extension 4-H Youth Development. "We want to ensure that our 4-H program continues to provide opportunities that will help our youth become successful, contributing members of their communities."

The Tufts' study further shows that, in order for youth to experience success, communities, families and schools need to provide access to programs such as 4-H as well as provide sustained adult interaction and mentoring.

The 4-H study, conducted by Tufts University and sponsored by the National 4-H Council, involved more than 4,000 youth and 2,000 parents from 25 states to

measure the impact personal and social factors have on a young person's development.

USA Today
Board-certified teachers boost student scores
6.12.08

WASHINGTON (AP) — Schools looking to hire teachers should keep an eye out for those with national board certification.

Students taught by educators certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards make bigger gains on standardized tests than students taught by other teachers, finds a National Research Council report out Wednesday.

"I would sure look for the credential," said Milton Hakel, a Bowling Green State University psychology professor who headed the committee that conducted the council review. "The fact that the signal is there is something that's useful to superintendents, to hiring committees, to districts."

It is not clear from the research whether the process of getting certified by the national board makes teachers better or if those who get certified were already top performers, according to the report. More research is needed to try to determine that, Hakel said.

Joseph Aguerrebere, president and CEO of the board, said the report puts to rest the question of whether board-certified teachers are more effective at boosting student scores than others. "It's a question that we're often asked," he said.

Schools have been increasingly focused on student test scores since the 2002 No Child Left Behind law was enacted. A goal of the law is to get all students working at their proper grade level in math and reading, according to standardized tests, by 2013-14.

The research council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, based its findings on a review of existing research and on some of its own analysis.

The national board is a nonprofit that, for more than a decade, has set standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do and then certifies those who meet the standards.

It generally takes teachers a year or more to get through the certification process, which includes taking subject-area tests and submitting on-the-job videotapes and samples of student and teacher work. It costs about \$2,500 to accredit each teacher.

Just 64,000 teachers have earned the accreditation, which amounts to a mere three teachers in every five schools, according to the report.

While teachers have to be licensed by their states, national board certification is voluntary. Not surprisingly, states that provide incentives to board-certified teachers — such as North Carolina and South Carolina_ have higher numbers of teachers who pursue the extra credential.

The report finds board-certified teachers are typically less likely than teachers in general to work in schools serving poor and minority students, two groups that tend to lag behind their peers nationally.

The New York Times
Democrats offer plans to revamp schools law
6.12.08

Sam Dillon

Democrats are dividing into camps as they debate a new course for education policy after President Bush leaves office.

On Wednesday, a group of a dozen prominent educators and lawmakers, led by Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein of New York and the Rev. Al Sharpton, said the United States' public schools shortchanged poor black and Latino children in a way that was "shameful," and urged Washington to squeeze teachers and administrators harder to raise achievement among minorities.

On Tuesday, about 60 prominent educators and academics issued another manifesto, which criticized the federal No Child Left Behind law and argued that schools alone could not close a racial achievement gap rooted in economic inequality. They urged a new emphasis on health clinics and other antipoverty programs that could help poor students arrive at school ready to learn.

The groups issuing the statements were composed overwhelmingly of Democrats. Mr. Klein and Mr. Sharpton's statement argued that federal policy should continue to hold schools accountable for raising the achievement of poor African-American and Latino youths, which is a focus of the federal law, but should also seek to assign more effective teachers to the nation's neediest classrooms. This is an area where the statement said the law had been weak.

Mayor Cory A. Booker of Newark, the president of the Colorado Senate and the leaders of the Washington and Baltimore school systems also signed the statement. The statement included a passage labeling teachers union contracts a significant obstacle to increasing the achievement of poor students.

"We must insist that our elected officials confront and address head-on crucial issues that created this crisis: teachers' contracts and state policies that keep ineffective teachers in classrooms and too often make it nearly impossible to get our best teachers paired up with the students who most need them," it said.

The other manifesto was signed by two schools superintendents, Beverly L. Hall of Atlanta and Rudy Crew of Miami-Dade County, and Thomas W. Payzant, the former superintendent in Boston, as well as the civil rights leader Julian Bond and former Attorney General Janet Reno, among others.

It criticized the No Child Left Behind law, Mr. Bush's signature domestic initiative, as narrowing instruction in some schools to little more than reading and math, and called for a "broader, bolder approach" that would increase investment in health and other services in poor communities and rely less exclusively on schools to solve the nation's social problems.

"Some schools have demonstrated unusual effectiveness," said the statement, published on Tuesday in paid space in The New York Times and The Washington Post. "But even they cannot, by themselves, close the entire gap between students from different backgrounds."

"Reducing social and economic disadvantages can also improve achievement," it said.

Neither document mentioned the presidential campaign, but signers of both said the documents were being made public now in hopes of generating more debate about education policies in the general election campaign than what had occurred during the primaries.

"With the Democratic primary ending and the general campaign starting, there's the sense that now is the time to lay out different visions of what our education policy should be," said Andrew Rotherham, a Democrat who is co-founder of Education Sector, a research group in Washington, and who co-signed the statement of principles issued by Mr. Klein and Mr. Sharpton. "Presidential campaigns are in many ways national conversations, so now is the time to lay out a new agenda."

An effort last year to reauthorize the federal law, which Congress passed in Mr. Bush's first year with bipartisan majorities, fell apart. Congress is unlikely to try again to rewrite the legislation, the most important statement of federal policy toward public schools, until well after a new president takes office.

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Andover Townsman (MA) Town debates extending the school day 6.13.08

Bethany Bray

After an \$11,000 study to examine extending the school day, the list of Andover schools considering the idea for a fall 2009 launch has dropped from six to two.

The two schools considering applying for state money this year, Wood Hill Middle School and High Plain Elementary, must submit preliminary proposals by July 31.

Hotly debated, the state's Extended Learning Time initiative would add 300 hours to the school year. Schools apply for and receive one-year grants. If Andover were to retain the 180-day school year, which includes a summer vacation, ELT would add an extra one hour, 40 minutes to every school day.

Boil down the arguments for and against the idea and you end up with two sayings: the famous Bob Dylan lyric "the times, they are a-changin'," and the old adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Proponents of ELT, including Superintendent Claudia Bach and some parents, believe the initiative can improve an already high-performing school district, bringing Andover students on par with students from other developed nations and allowing teachers to expand on lessons.

"We are a little asleep at the switch (in the U.S.) about monumental changes happening (in education internationally). ... I don't see our district competing against Wellesley or Newton, I see us competing against China," Bach said. "We rank high in Massachusetts. This is a district people want to move in to. But we're the best of a bad lot. Internationally, our scores are low."

Other parents believe Andover is doing well overall, are worried that funding might fall through, think ELT is not right for Andover, and believe ELT takes children away from time with family.

Karen Lu, a High Plain Elementary parent, believes Andover students are globally competitive. She said her son's math olympiad class recently placed in the top 20 percent out of teams from around the world.

"I don't think things need to be that radically changed. Change can be good, but this is just not the kind of change we want ... These are kids, they're going to be working eight hours a day for the rest of their lives," Lu said. "There is no backup plan, when the state drops us from funding, we're done. If we get accepted, we'll get funding for a year or two. We'll get dropped and we'll go to the town to ask for funding, and they'll laugh at us."

First steps

ELT is an initiative started in 2005 by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, formerly known as the Department of Education.

Six schools in Andover — four elementaries, Shawsheen (K-2) School and Wood Hill Middle School — were awarded an ELT planning grant in October 2007. With the \$11,000 grant, the schools formed their own committees and began to research the benefits and drawbacks of adding 300 hours.

Now, eight months later, most have decided to slow down their application process for multiple reasons, Bach said. Besides several schools starting next year with new principals and Bancroft's making plans for building renovations, ELT applications have stalled because of vocal parent opposition and a lack of a concrete, specific model of how the time would be used.

"There are a lot of unanswered questions, and until they're answered it's a little frightening to move forward. It's a big change. This is going to really be something that affects every child's life in an ELT school, as well as families," said Caroline Ren Jackson, a mother of three at Bancroft. "I'd like Chinese, but what if my neighbor wants Arabic or karate lessons? There are too many undefined questions that are lurking out there right now, no specific goal of ELT."

"I'm not rejecting ELT outright, I'm just wary of it."

During the current school year, 18 schools in eight school districts are using an expanding school day.

Andover would be one of the first high-performing districts in the state to implement ELT. Previously, ELT has been used in underperforming districts, which have seen a marked increase in standardized test scores as a result, said Linda Glickstein, grants coordinator.

Lu said she's most aggravated that a well-off town like Andover even has the chance to apply for grant money.

"We'd be taking money away from poor districts with high drop-out rates. It's almost like us going to Lawrence and taking their free-lunch money," Lu said. "Absolutely, under no circumstances do we need it. With all these down and out towns in Massachusetts, why would you give that money to Andover? Not only are we an affluent community, but there is a lot of resistance (to ELT)."

Next step

After a preliminary ELT proposal is submitted next month to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (formerly the Department of Education), a second draft — the actual ELT grant application — is due on Dec. 1. Any final application submitted in December would have to be approved by the Andover School Committee and teachers' union.

Deborah Silberstein, School Committee chairwoman, said it's too early to tell how the committee would vote. Members have been discussing ELT since August, gathering information and attending parent meetings on ELT throughout the year, she said.

"Our role is to assess if Expanded Learning Time is going to help our district meet its goals and objectives," she said. "If any school were to be going forward (with ELT), there would have to be agreement between teachers in that building and the school community."

Submitting a draft proposal in July would not mean that a school would have to follow through and implement ELT, Bach said.

But if it does, teachers and staff would have more time for development meetings and workshops, and students would have time to spend on lessons learned during the school day — or on other areas. A wide range of ideas have been suggested, from additional lessons in music, physical education, engineering, robotics, history or foreign language, Bach and Glickstein said.

The best part about all the discussions over ELT, Bach said, is that Andover schools are re-evaluating their school day.

"Changes will happen next year, with or without a grant," she said.

Teachers can opt out

If awarded, the ELT grant gives \$1,300 per student for one year, Bach said. The day would go from six hours to about eight. Part of the grant money would pay teachers extra to stay the extra time. Some would pay for the Department of Community Services, YMCA or local businesses to run enrichment programs.

Teachers at a school with ELT in place would not be required to stay the extra time, Bach said. School staff would have a choice to opt-out of the longer school day, or stay and be paid accordingly.

Tom Meyers, president of the Andover Education Association teachers' union, said anything that impacts hours, wages or working conditions of teachers — which ELT certainly would — needs to be negotiated.

As of now, the union has been involved in the ELT process only as an observer, he said. Meyers, who teaches at Andover High School, has been attending ELT meetings in town and accompanied the superintendent on a site visit at a school in another town with an extended day.

Once ELT decisions become more concrete through the next school year, the AEA will become involved, Meyers said.

"We are in support of the exploration of ELT. ... We have a significant interest in the idea, specifically the idea of improving the learning of students," Meyers said. "Although we haven't taken any official vote, I can say there is a significant expectation placed on teachers. In the curriculum we're asked to cover, more and more is added, and nothing seems to be taken off the plate of teachers. "

What a longer day would mean

- A 25-percent increase in school time for every student in the school; 300 extra hours per year, an extra one hour, 40 minutes each day under the 180-day school year
- Additional academic instruction and enrichment programs, such as gym, art and global studies, meant to offer a more well-rounded education.
- More professional development and teacher planning time.
- An ELT grant gives \$1,300 per student. Part of the grant money would pay teachers for the extra time and some would pay for enrichment programs.
- Teachers would not be required to stay longer and could opt out of the extra hours

Source: Linda Glickstein, grants coordinator, and Superintendent Claudia Bach

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Democrat Chronicle (NY)
Duffy wants to restore funds for after-school in Rochester
6.13.08

Erica Bryant

Mayor Robert Duffy plans to restore funding to city-operated recreational programs that are housed at 11 city schools.

A new partnership between the city and the Rochester School District means that participants will soon be spending less time on "boondoggle and basketball" and more time with their books.

Duffy's original \$478 million budget proposal called for the elimination of after-school recreational programs that the city operates at schools during the school year and the summer. The cuts would have affected about 2,000 students.

At a Thursday news conference, Duffy said he will continue funding these programs until the city and the district work out a new partnership model and funding plan that will give these recreation and after-school programs a more academic focus.

District and city leaders will be working on plans for such a model this summer and will examine other cities' efforts.

On Thursday, Duffy cited the Providence After School Alliance as a model he admires. This private-public coalition provides a variety of educational, cultural, musical, physical and social after-school opportunities in Providence, R.I.

In the meantime, funding will be restored to after-school programs at schools 2, 6, 17, 28, 41, 42, 43, 46, 52 and East and Madison high schools. District spokesman Tom Petronio said that currently the main purpose of these programs is recreation.

Brizard called the hours between 3 and 6 p.m. "critical" for city students and stressed the importance of having academic intervention services available for students who attend public recreation programs.

His proposed Rochester School District budget includes more than \$13 million for after-school programming, including extended day and week programs for all high schools.

School Board President Malik Evans praised the plan, saying that aligning recreation and academics is necessary if Rochester students are to compete in the world economy.

"Our old model of open basketball and boondoggle without a connection to educational learning is not preparing our children for their future jobs," Duffy said in a statement. "We want the city's recreation and youth services to contribute positively to our graduation rates."