

United States Senate  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions

Committee Field Hearing

on

*“Innovative Approaches to School Time”*

Presentation to the Committee

by

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If standards are the constant, then time must be the variable. When both time and standards are the constant, teachers are forced to work in a system that demands coverage and coverage is the enemy of understanding. When schools are not structured with the time necessary to teach for understanding, then students, teachers, schools and entire districts are labeled as failing when quite often they are making great progress.

When standards are the constant and time is allowed to be the variable, teachers are able to teach for understanding. Understanding leads to deep conceptual knowledge that is supported by a body of skills and facts. Students are able to apply their understanding in diverse situations and solve problems in innovative and creative ways. Creating schools where time is the variable is the path toward the vision of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce:

The best employers the world over will be looking for the most competent, most creative, and most innovative people on the face of the earth and will be willing to pay them top dollar for their services . . . Beyond [strong skills in English, mathematics, technology, and science], candidates will have to be comfortable with ideas and abstractions, good at both analysis and synthesis, creative and innovative, self-disciplined and well-organized, able to learn very quickly and work well as a member of a team and have the flexibility to adapt quickly to

frequent changes in the labor market as the shifts in the economy become ever faster and more dramatic.

As a nation, we must invest in the following uses of time as the Opportunity-to-Learn Standards that make the realization of content and performance standards possible. As we focus on innovative uses of time in our schools, we should:

- Ensure that there is expanded learning time for young children including, but not limited, to quality pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, and extended school years.
- Create flexible time within the day for intervention, remediation and enrichment.
- Invest in full-service Community Schools that are open evenings, weekends and year-round.
- Eradicate the practice of labeling students in grades and instead allow them to learn at their own pace.
- Disconnect high school graduation from Carnegie Units.
- Invest in teacher learning time, above and separate from the time spent teaching students.

Reform initiatives have been created in silos with each effort standing alone waiting for the promise of being the thing that changes the entire system. Time has that possibility. The investment would be tremendous and the results astounding.