Executive Summary

How can we close the achievement and opportunity gaps that plague our nation's public schools? What constellation of strategies will provide American students, particularly those living in poverty, with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st century world? How can we improve thousands of schools in high-poverty areas that are failing to prepare enough of their students for long-term success? More and more, today's education leaders and policymakers are grappling with these compelling challenges and looking toward expanded learning time for solutions.

Across the country, momentum is growing for schools to move beyond the traditional calendar of 180 six-and-a-half-hour days. Initially, these efforts were found primarily within the charter school movement, such as the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) network, which made expanded time a core element of its school design model, and among a small number of pioneering district schools that managed to expand learning time through the work of innovative leaders. Then, in 2010, the federal guidelines for the School Improvement Grant

(SIG) program were revamped to focus on four models designed to turn around the nation's lowest performing schools. Two of the school models—"transformation" and "turnaround"— require that schools increase learning time for their students. With an initial infusion of $3.5 billion, as many as 850 schools, serving 500,000 students, have begun implementing these new models. And, although limited information exists, as yet, about how they have been implemented, the guidelines will continue to stimulate further experimentation with expanded learning time in schools and districts nationwide.

Today, there are at least 1,000 schools across the U.S. offering an expanded schedule, according to a 2010-2011 survey conducted by the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL). As interest in expanded learning time grows across the country, so, too, does a corresponding concern for how schools can ensure that adding time truly translates into a better education for every student. Clearly, more time in school does not guarantee improved learning outcomes for every individual child or even for students in the aggregate. As with any initiative or change effort, the quality of implementation matters.

Consequently, a new question is emerging for the field: How can schools maximize the great potential of expanded time and make the most effective possible use of this important resource?

Fortunately, we can learn from the dozens of outstanding expanded-time schools across the nation that are offering students a rigorous and well-rounded education and achieving impressive academic outcomes. Some of these schools belong to growing networks of charter schools, and others are the result of single site innovation in districts. These schools are demonstrating that with more time, strong leaders and teachers, and well-designed educational programs, schools can close the achievement and opportunity gaps for poor students.

To unlock the secrets of such success, NCTL chose to explore time use at some of the nation's highest-performing, expanded-time schools that serve high-poverty students. Our primary goal for this study is to advance understanding of the ways high-performing, expanded-time schools use additional time. Through interviews and site visits, we have documented and analyzed how schools allocate their time, and, more significantly, the specific practices which ensure that expanded school time is used productively and well.

Between January and June, 2011, NCTL identified 30 academically high-performing schools with longer school days and years, and then we studied how these schools have capitalized on more learning time to yield impressive student outcomes. (See Table 1 on page 12 for data on each of the 30 schools.) Schools selected for the study share the following characteristics:

They offer significantly more time than do surrounding schools in their districts (at least an hour more per day or at least 10 more days per year); they serve a large percentage of low-income students (greater than 60 percent of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch); and these schools consistently demonstrate higher proficiency rates (at least 5 percentage points higher on state standardized tests for math or English language arts), with 18 of the 30 schools outperforming district averages in ELA and/or math by 20 percent or more. (See Appendix for more information on methodology and rationale for selecting schools.)

This report identifies a set of eight powerful practices of these successful, expanded-time schools. Our selection of these eight practices was informed not just by our observations and discussions with these schools, but also by more than six years of work with schools in the process of planning and implementing an expansion of their school calendar. NCTL's work with more than 100 schools planning to convert to expanded-time schedules—and our on-going work over five years with 30 schools that have completed such conversions—has afforded us the opportunity to examine significant differences in the implementation decisions schools make in expanding the school calendar and to better appreciate how these decisions affect the overall impact of the additional time. Interviews and visits to the high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study confirmed many of the lessons we have learned, provided some new insights, and deepened the nuances of our understanding about what it means to expand learning time effectively.
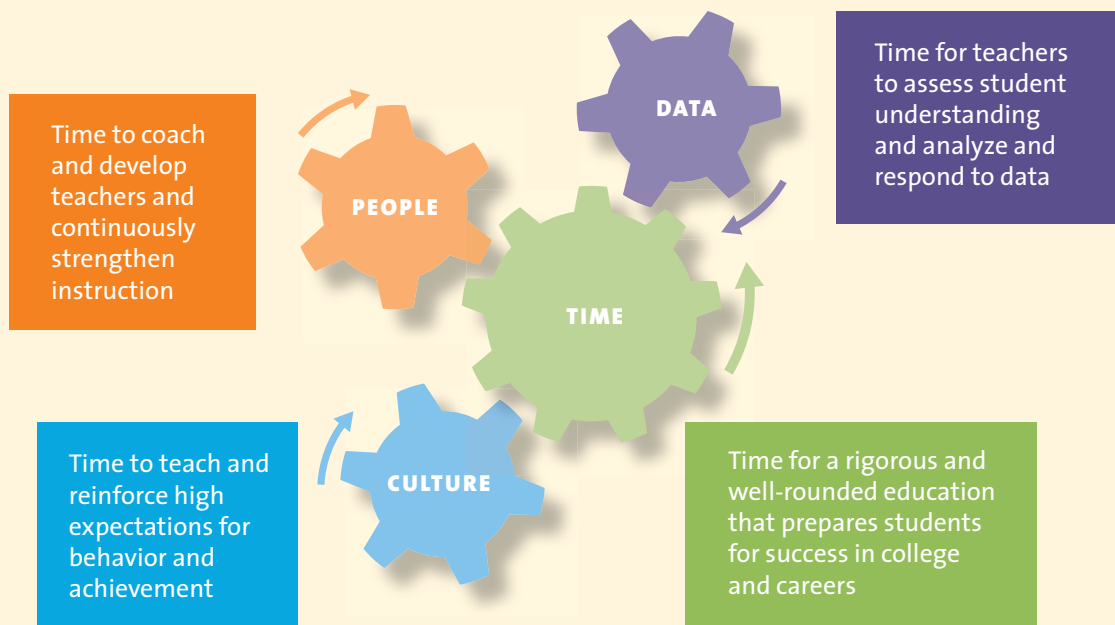
The Role of Time

The educators at the schools profiled in this study believe that more time is fundamental to providing a high-quality, rigorous, and well-rounded education that prepares students for success. More time allows schools to offer a challenging academic program, while still providing individualized academic supports that address the specific skill and knowledge gaps that can impede students' progress. With more time, schools can engage teachers in the significant work of analyzing student data, strategizing on common instructional practices, and honing their skills in the classroom. More time also allows schools to focus not just on the "tested subjects" of English and math, but also to provide a deep and engaging education in the sciences, humanities, social studies, and the arts. More time affords opportunities to expose students to the world outside their schools and communities, to build new skills and interests that they will pursue throughout their lives, and to offer activities that build a strong school culture—one that values and supports learning. Finally, more time allows schools, particularly high schools, to effectively prepare students who may be the first in their families to attend college, for future academic and professional success.

It should be noted that schools do not necessarily have to offer more time to implement any one of the eight practices described in this report. Past studies of high-performing schools that don't offer more time often have pointed to some of these very same practices as crucial reasons schools succeed. Further, more time is not the only reform needed for struggling schools; expanded time acts as a catalyst, or accelerator, to a series of other reforms as well. Indeed, it is this interaction of more time with other sound practices that leads to meaningful impact. Through NCTL's considerable experience on the ground, along with our observations for this study and other research, we have developed a four-factor model for effective school improvement involving expanded learning time. In this model, the power of time is synergized by productive investments in human capital—involving the development of outstanding leaders and teachers, the effective application of data, and the formation of a constructive school culture focused on high expectations and mutual accountability. Together, these four factors become vital, interactive companions in each successful school improvement. Time reform, people, data, and culture, in other words, comprise four interlocking gears for improving schools.

As depicted in the figure below, expanding learning time can have a *mutually* catalyzing and supporting effect with the three other reform gears. In this diagram, the gear labeled *People* refers to a wide range of efforts to develop or hire talented school leaders and highly effective teachers. While not all people reforms require additional time, schools in this study demonstrate how their work to improve teacher effectiveness relies on additional time for teachers.

Four Interlocking Gears of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools

Time to coach and develop teachers and continuously strengthen instruction

Time for teachers to assess student understanding and analyze and respond to data

PEOPLE

DATA

TIME

CULTURE

Time to teach and reinforce high expectations for behavior and achievement

Time for a rigorous and well-rounded education that prepares students for success in college and careers
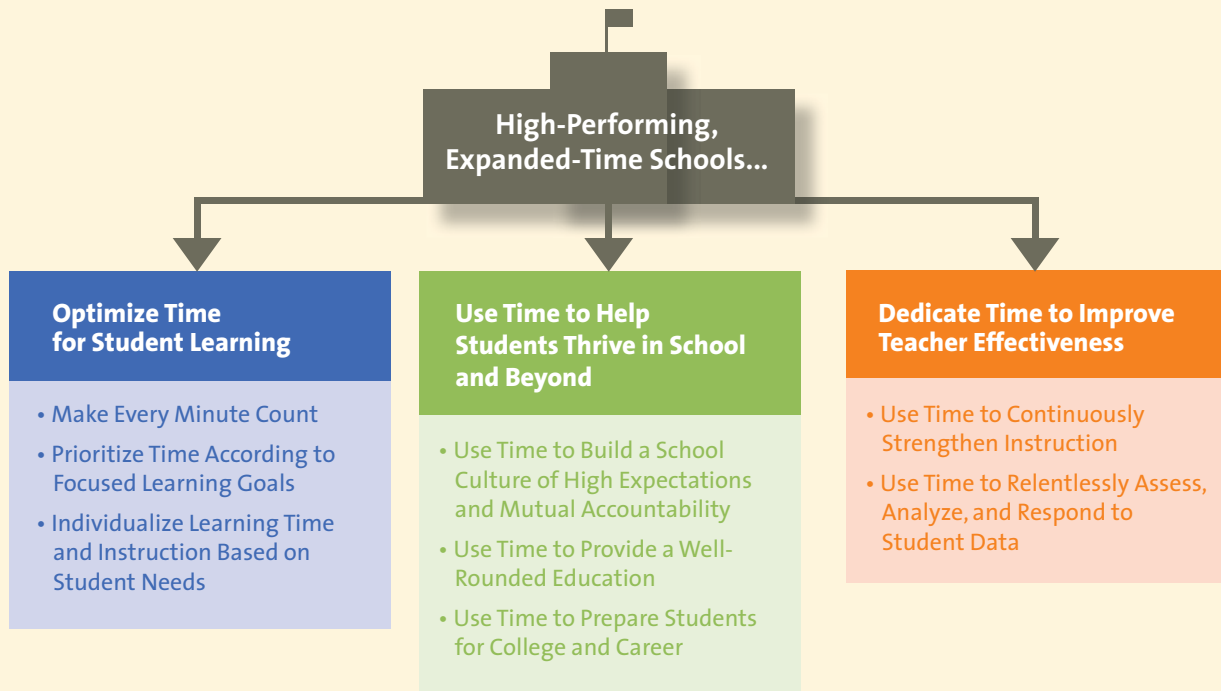
The corollary is that strong teachers and leaders use time well—that is, the two gears work together. The gear labeled *Data* refers to the many facets of improving the collection and use of data in schools. While developing excellent data systems does not require an expanded school schedule, to make full use of these systems, schools do need more time to conduct assessments, analyze, and respond to data. Again, reciprocally, the deft use of this data renders learning time more effective, because it guides investing instructional time exactly where individual students need it most. Finally, to establish a positive school *Culture*, schools do not necessarily need to expand learning time, but additional time can allow schools to offer a range of activities that build school spirit, teach shared values, and set and reinforce high expectations for behavior and achievement. This positive school culture also helps turn the gears by making the time for learning more productive.

All four gears in this diagram are fundamental to successful school reform. While the gear of *Time* helps turn the other three gears, in the absence of the others, this gear will spin unproductively. In that event, more time will have only limited impact on student learning.

The teachers and administrators at the schools profiled in this study will explain that while time alone is not enough, they believe more time, well spent, is an absolutely essential factor in the success of their school. The purpose of this report is to delve more deeply into what it means to use time well, drawing on some of the nation's most successful schools as laboratories for learning.

Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools

High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools...

Optimize Time for Student Learning	Use Time to Help Students Thrive in School and Beyond	Dedicate Time to Improve Teacher Effectiveness
• Make Every Minute Count • Prioritize Time According to Focused Learning Goals • Individualize Learning Time and Instruction Based on Student Needs	• Use Time to Build a School Culture of High Expectations and Mutual Accountability • Use Time to Provide a Well-Rounded Education • Use Time to Prepare Students for College and Career	• Use Time to Continuously Strengthen Instruction • Use Time to Relentlessly Assess, Analyze, and Respond to Student Data

Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools

None of the eight practices described in this report are new ideas. Topics such as using data to drive instruction, building a positive school culture, and preparing students for college and career success are recurring themes among education leaders, reformers, researchers, and policymakers. What this study is among the first to explore is the unique, empowering relationship between expanded time and some of these significant school improvement strategies.

The eight practices highlighted in this report, which attempt to unpack this relationship, can be grouped into three categories. **The first three practices** describe a fundamental approach to *optimizing time for student learning* that seems foundational to these schools' success. High-performing, expanded-time schools consider time a precious resource; hence, they disburse it sparingly and invest it carefully, based on focused learning goals and individual student needs.

The second category of practices includes our observations about how these effective schools use time to support student success more broadly than just by offering intense and rigorous academic instruction. **Practices four through six** describe how schools in this study use time to broaden educational opportunities

for students and provide an educational experience and school climate that *help students thrive in school and beyond*. While most of the schools expand time for core academic instruction, and these academic classes take precedence in student schedules, the expanded day or year also affords schools the opportunity to invest in additional types of learning and student development.

The third set of practices describes how high-performing, expanded-time schools *dedicate time for teachers to improve their teaching*. Policymakers and education leaders who advocate for expanded learning time are often most focused on the need for additional time for students and often overlook the value of an expanded schedule for teachers' development. **Practices seven and eight** describe how high-performing, expanded-time schools in this study use an expanded school schedule to improve teacher effectiveness.

I. OPTIMIZING TIME FOR STUDENT LEARNING
High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools:

1. Make Every Minute Count
Administrators and teachers at these high-performing schools are single-minded in their commitment to maximizing and optimizing learning time for both students and teachers.

Even with more time overall, every minute is deeply valued and the whole schedule is designed and re-designed to best meet needs and priorities. Lesson plans are carefully crafted to make class time highly productive. Learning kicks in from the moment class starts and the pace is energetic until class ends. Teacher meetings are well-planned and focused. Schedules and procedures are developed and routinely modified to eliminate wasted time and disruption from activities such as locker breaks, transitions, arrivals, and dismissals. Attendance and participation are closely monitored because students cannot learn when they are not in school or not engaged. We have placed *make every minute count* first in our list of practices, not to suggest that it is more important than the others, but because these schools have taught us the need to maintain a sense of urgency, messaging to all members of the school community that there is no time to waste, even as learning time expands.

2. Prioritize Time According to Focused Learning Goals

School leaders at these high-performing, expanded-time schools recognize that they must tightly align how they allocate their school time relative to their core goals. For most of the schools in this study, eliminating the academic achievement gap is the top priority. So, rather than filling their lengthened schedule with new initiatives and programs that could distract students and faculty from this aim, these schools are using the expanded time to offer their students more opportunity to receive rigorous academic instruction. Furthermore, class time at these schools is highly focused, with teachers

planning their lessons based on clear objectives for their students' learning. Often, teachers "backward-map" lessons based on explicit goals for skills students should master by the end of the class, unit, semester, and/or year. Teachers at these successful, expanded-time schools use student data to develop and guide their focus for group instruction and to tailor their teaching to the needs of each individual student. When the data show that students need more time to achieve mastery in a specific area, in response, the educators will structure student schedules to afford more class time, or create opportunities for small group instruction or individual tutoring sessions, in response. This same focused and deliberate planning and prioritization of learning time occurs when these schools set goals for student development that extend beyond academic achievement— such as excellence in the arts, career readiness, or character education. In every setting, the expanded time is invested, and trade-offs are made, in accordance with a clear set of priorities that characterize and distinguish the school.

3. Individualize Learning Time and Instruction Based on Student Needs

Increasingly, education leaders are realizing that a one-size-fits-all approach to education is inadequate to help all students achieve at high levels. Students, particularly high-poverty students, come to school with diverse educational backgrounds and histories. Rather than trying to fit student learning into a preconceived and uniform schedule, highly successful schools mold academic instruction and learning time to fit the unique needs of the students they serve. Instruction is not

limited to core class periods. Students requiring extra support participate in specially designed intervention classes, review sessions, or one-on-one tutoring. And whether during the expanded day, or after school, or on weekends, the amount of learning time, content of the instruction, group size, and expertise of the instructor are tailored to these students' specific skills and knowledge gaps. This type of double, and sometimes triple and beyond dosing—along with efforts to constantly adjust instruction to target specific needs—means that students are receiving a far more personalized education than is customary at conventional schools. And personalization of learning time is foundational to the success of an expanded-time school.

II. HELPING STUDENTS THRIVE IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools:

4. Use Time to Build a School Culture of High Expectations and Mutual Accountability

School culture is an intangible concept, and one that is hard to measure, yet education leaders and reformers are deeply aware of its importance. The teachers and administrators we interviewed for this study attribute their school's success, in large part, to a positive culture that emphasizes high expectations for student behavior and achievement and that teaches students the value of hard work and self-discipline. Adults and

students alike are accountable for results and students, teachers, parents, and school leaders all work together to achieve success. Some schools use the term "no excuses" to characterize this particular ethos where the only acceptable response to failures and setbacks is for everyone to work harder and smarter. To build and continuously reinforce this positive culture, these educators invest substantial time and energy on routines and activities—such as student orientations and advisory programs that teach school values, community meetings that celebrate student success, and incentive systems that hold students accountable for their actions.

5. Use Time to Provide a Well-Rounded Education

Many of the high-performing, expanded-time schools in this report place a premium on providing a broad array of learning opportunities in such areas as the arts, foreign languages, hands-on science, business, community service, and leadership. Administrators and staff in these schools view a good education as going beyond high skills in literacy and numeracy to include a much broader range of subjects, in addition to the tested ones, and a wider variety of experiences and activities than just academic classes. While not a universal practice among the schools in this study, many leverage an expanded schedule to include time for such classes and activities, which expose students to new skills and interests, help make learning more relevant, and aim to deepen

students' engagement in school. In fact, some schools make time not just to expose students to new skills but also to help them build mastery in particular extracurricular areas.

6. Use Time to Prepare Students for College and Career

The high-performing schools in this study invest time in a range of programs geared toward preparing their students for success after high school graduation. Schools with large populations of students who will be the first in their families to attend college spend time building their students' understanding of the value of a college education; supporting them through the college selection, application, and admission processes; and preparing them for the type of independent learning they will experience in college settings. While this practice was observed most fully at high schools, some elementary and middle schools in our study begin even earlier to instill in students an appreciation of the importance of attending college. Though college acceptance is the primary goal for most of these schools, some also focus on familiarizing students with career opportunities and helping their students to build the skills they will need to succeed in the work environment.

III. DEDICATING TIME TO IMPROVE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS
High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools:

7. Use Time to Continuously Strengthen Instruction

Through added professional development and planning days, or extra preparation and planning periods, or simply additional time to observe other classes or meet with instructional coaches, successful schools are using an expanded schedule to build a cadre of excellent teachers. At these high-performing schools, teachers spend substantial amounts of time working with instructional coaches, who often also serve as mentors, and with colleagues to engage in thoughtful lesson-planning that takes into consideration good teaching practices and clear

objectives for student learning. Teachers also spend time in classroom observations, meetings with their coaches, and feedback sessions aimed at improving and refining their skills in the classroom.

8. Use Time to Relentlessly Assess, Analyze, and Respond to Student Data

The importance of using data to inform instruction has been well documented, and districts and schools across the country are working to improve their capacities to collect and analyze student data.[1] However, using data effectively takes time because the data must not only be collected (through student testing), but also processed, analyzed, and applied in practice. Schools in this study invest significant time assessing students, engaging teachers in analyzing the data, and then using the analyses to improve instruction and identify students who need specific additional support. This process creates a continuous improvement loop that allows schools to provide excellent instruction driven by student needs. The loop of assessment, analysis, improvement, and differentiation, followed again by assessment, continues until every student achieves mastery. In fact, many schools take this process one step further, using the data to constantly reshape programs and schedules to better support student learning.

It is worth noting that every school examined in this study does not place equal emphasis on all eight practices. For example, some schools prioritize data analysis but are somewhat less focused on school culture-building. In fact, schools will frequently face choices in trying to implement all of the practices well, because even with a longer school day or year there is not always enough time to do everything fully. Schools may need to choose, for instance, between focusing time and attention on individualized academic supports and offering substantial amounts of time for enriching extracurricular activities.

At the same time, there can be dynamic synergies among the eight practices. To individualize instruction and provide academic supports tailored to student needs, for instance, a school must excel at using data to identify the standards that require review or re-teaching. Similarly, some schools create appealing enrichment classes tied to specific academic priorities—such as forensics, robotics, or geometry through art—with a dual aim of bolstering learning in a focus area and engaging students through fun, hands-on learning. Indeed, our observations suggest that the schools with the strongest student outcomes tend to integrate multiple powerful practices into a single coherent school design.

A Note on Reading This Report

Time Well Spent: Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools was developed to share the lessons we have learned that illuminate effective approaches to expanding learning time with a wide range of audiences—including education leaders and policymakers, school administrators and teachers, and consultants and representatives of partner organizations that work directly with schools. These lessons also may prove useful, even valuable, to anyone else who is curious about how successful, expanded-time schools serving high-poverty students use time well. Each of the eight practices is explored in depth in its own section, and each section includes examples of the practice in action at particular schools. Examples are provided from elementary, middle, and high schools for most of the eight practices. (Practice Six, which focuses on college and career preparation, is explored exclusively at the high school level.) Wherever possible, we have tried to provide a balance of examples from charter and district expanded-time schools, although there tend to be more charter school examples because more charter than district schools met our study criteria.

Our goal is to encourage all school leaders and educators reading this report to look beyond some of the differences between their school and the schools profiled here to discover significant commonalities. While acknowledging disparities in school size, operating structure, geographic location, or grade level, we believe that educators can still find much that can be learned from the experiences of other schools. Although some distinctions among schools may prove substantive in the end, we hope that readers will be able to focus on the common opportunities, challenges, and decisions all schools face regarding how to allocate and leverage time.

 Within each practice, we have identified three *Keys to Success*—implementation practices that help to ensure that the additional time is well-used and achieves its intended goals. These strategies— totaling 24 in all—are intended to provide a blueprint for schools considering how to improve their efforts in the eight practice areas and to reap the full potential of expanded learning time. (See Table 2, on page 14, for a full list of the 24 *Keys to Success*.) Finally, an *Appendix* details the methodology NCTL used to identify the schools included in this study and summarizes the information we collected about the schools from interviews, student and teacher schedules, and other data.

Table 1: High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools

School Name	Location	Grades	School Type	Students	% Low Income	Hours/Year
Achievement First Crown Heights Middle School	Brooklyn, NY	5 – 8	Charter	296	72%	1664
Amistad Academy Middle School	New Haven, CT	5 – 8	Charter	295	77%	1571
An Achievable Dream High School	Newport News, VA	9 – 12	District	188	83%	1680
Arthur Ashe Charter School	New Orleans, LA	K – 8	Charter	322	92%	1546
Aspire Port City Academy	Stockton, CA	K – 5	Charter	405	82%	1224
Boston Arts Academy	Boston, MA	9 – 12	District	384	62%	1398
Brooklyn Generation School	Brooklyn, NY	9 – 12	District	320	81%	1303
Clarence Edwards Middle School	Boston, MA	6 – 8	District	496	87%	1544
Excel Academy Charter School	Boston, MA	5 – 8	Charter	212	72%	1459
Frank M. Silvia Elementary	Fall River, MA	PK – 5	District	637	66%	1471
Golder College Prep	Chicago, IL	9 – 12	Charter	540	88%	1303
Griffith Elementary School	Phoenix, AZ	K – 6	District	619	85%	1320
IDEA College Preparatory Donna	Donna, TX	6 – 12	Charter	810	86%	1416
Jacob Hiatt Magnet School	Worcester, MA	PK – 6	District	456	71%	1395
Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy	Dallas, TX	9 – 11	District	300	81%	1400
KIPP Heartwood Academy	San Jose, CA	5 – 8	Charter	390	82%	1656
KIPP Houston High School	Houston, TX	9 – 12	Charter	448	88%	1628
KIPP SHINE Prep	Houston, TX	PK – 4	Charter	801	96%	1679
Mary D. Coghill Elementary School	New Orleans, LA	PK – 8	District	584	92%	1408
Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus	Philadelphia, PA	7 – 12	Charter	690	91%	1384
Mastery Charter Schools Thomas Campus	Philadelphia, PA	7 – 12	Charter	587	68%	1297
MATCH Charter Public High School	Boston, MA	9 – 12	Charter	228	77%	1277
Matthew J. Kuss Middle	Fall River, MA	6 – 8	District	650	84%	1507
North Star Academy	Newark, NJ	9 – 12	Charter	204	76%	1509
Robert Treat Academy	Newark, NJ	K – 8	Charter	525	62%	1421
Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary	San Jose, CA	K – 5	Charter	500	91%	1368
Roxbury Preparatory Charter School	Boston, MA	6 – 8	Charter	258	74%	1539
Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School	Brooklyn, NY	5 – 8	Charter	248	83%	1549
Woodland Hills Academy	Turtle Creek, PA	K – 7	District	300	64%	1463
YES Prep North Central	Houston, TX	6 – 12	Charter	758	81%	1645

Table 2: Eight Powerful Practices and Keys to Success

OPTIMIZE TIME FOR STUDENT LEARNING

| Practice	3 Keys to Success
1. Make Every Minute Count	• Plan lessons to maximize time on task and student engagement • Minimize non-instructional time • Emphasize attendance
2. Prioritize Time According to Focused Learning Goals	• Use data to identify priorities and goals • Keep the focus on the goals • Monitor progress towards goals
3. Individualize Learning Time and Instruction Based on Student Needs	• Train teachers to leverage additional time for individualized instruction • Use data to select, group, and re-group students for support • Integrate and align academic supports to core instruction

USE TIME TO HELP STUDENTS THRIVE IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Practice	3 Keys to Success
4. Use Time to Build a School Culture of High Expectations and Mutual Accountability	• Identify and consistently reinforce a small set of core values that are easy to remember • Train and support staff in setting and reinforcing expectations • Communicate expectations to parents
5. Use Time to Provide a Well-Rounded Education	• Respond to student interests • Start with exposure and offer opportunities for specialization and mastery • Create partnerships that bring in outside expertise and leverage the skills and expertise of teachers
6. Use Time to Prepare Students for College and Career	• Partner with colleges, businesses, and community organizations • Build a school culture committed to college completion • Support students who will be first-generation college students

DEDICATE TIME TO IMPROVE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Practice	3 Keys to Success
7. Use Time to Continuously Strengthen Instruction	• Provide teachers with frequent feedback and coaching • Focus on a small set of improvement goals • Create a culture that values feedback and continuous improvement
8. Use Time to Relentlessly Assess, Analyze, and Respond to Student Data	• Build school-wide commitment to data use • Provide teachers with tools that simplify real-time data analysis • Create protocols that support teachers in planning around data use

High-Performing, Expanded-Time Schools
Highlighted in *Time Well Spent*
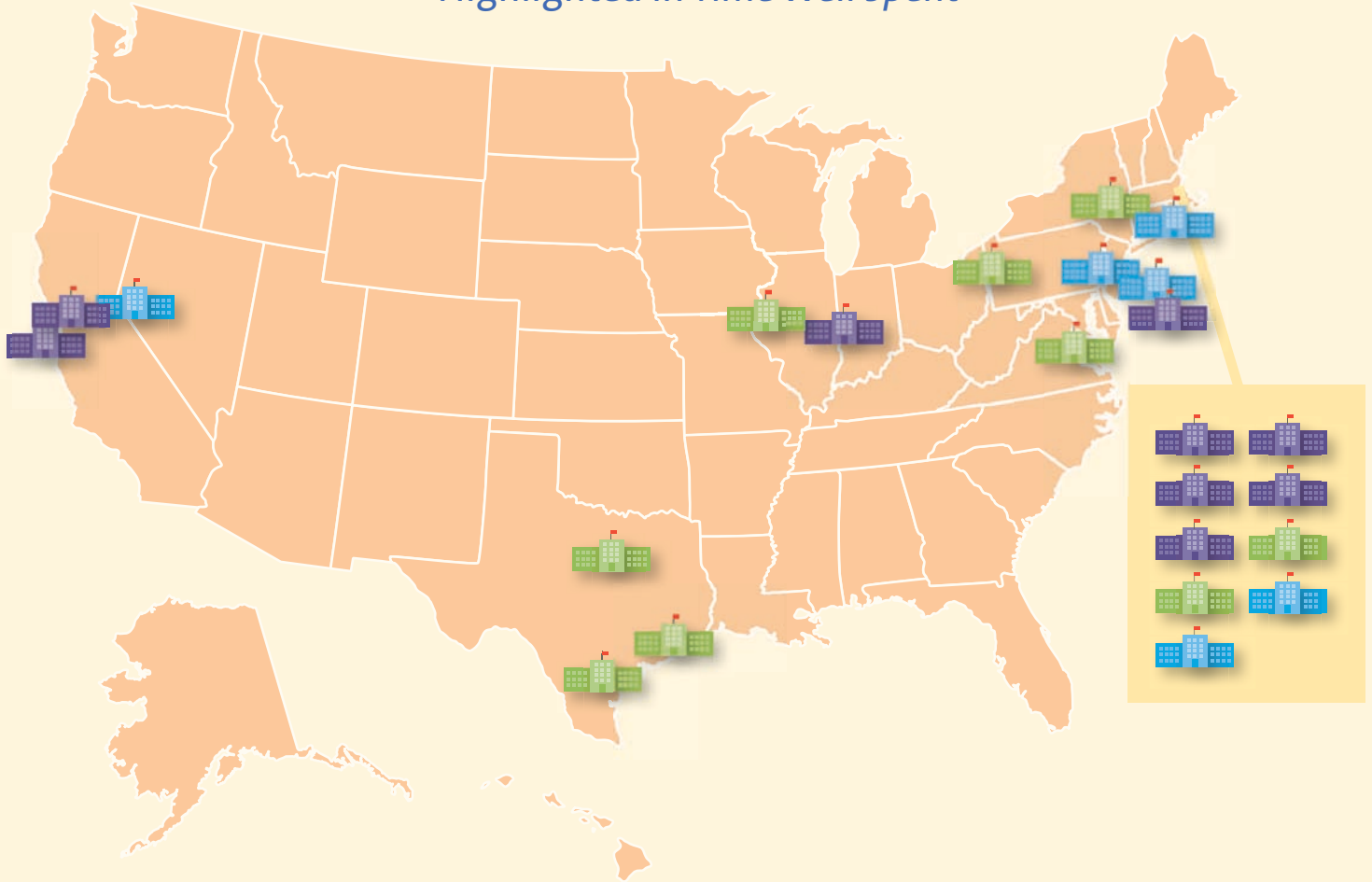
OPTIMIZE TIME FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Aspire Port City Academy (Stockton, CA)

Clarence Edwards Middle School (Boston, MA)

Excel Academy Charter School (Boston, MA)

Frank M. Silvia Elementary School (Fall River, MA)

Jacob Hiatt Magnet School (Worcester, MA)

Golder College Prep (Chicago, IL)

North Star Academy (Newark, NJ)

Rocketship Mateo Sheedy Elementary (San Jose, CA)

Roxbury Preparatory Charter School (Boston, MA)

USE TIME TO HELP STUDENTS THRIVE IN SCHOOL AND BEYOND

An Achievable Dream High School (Newport News, VA)

Brooklyn Generation School (Brooklyn, NY)

Excel Academy Charter School (Boston, MA)

IDEA College Preparatory Donna (Donna, TX)

KIPP SHINE Prep (Houston, TX)

Matthew J. Kuss Middle School (Fall River, MA)

Golder College Prep (Chicago, IL)

Woodland Hills Academy (Turtle Creek, PA)

DEDICATE TIME TO IMPROVE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Amistad Academy Middle School (New Haven, CT)

Aspire Port City Academy (Stockton, CA)

Jacob Hiatt Magnet School (Worcester, MA)

Mastery Charter Schools Shoemaker Campus (Philadelphia, PA)

Matthew J. Kuss Middle School (Fall River, MA)

North Star Academy (Newark, NJ)