

INTRODUCTION

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WE LIVE TODAY in an ecology of growing inequality, where economic, political, and social disparities increasingly constrain the education and, therefore, the life chances of children who grow up on the wrong side of the divide. A recent study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that the United States has among the lowest levels of intergenerational social mobility—and one of the tightest relationships between parental socioeconomic status and students' achievement and subsequent earnings.¹ Indeed, recent research has highlighted the consequences of growing income inequality in the United States.² Researchers confirm that, more than ever, family wealth is tightly associated with markedly better educational outcomes for children and youth living in wealthy families.³ These outcomes hold true along a continuum of measures, including grades and standardized test scores, rates of participation in extracurricular activities, graduation rates, and rates of college enrollment and completion.⁴

The chapters collected in this volume make up a sustained exploration into what public education needs to be a forceful driver of social equity in America. Specifically, the authors address the proposition that, for schools to disrupt the strong link between family background and educational success, we must continue to rethink what counts as “education.” And, in doing so, we must reach beyond the constraining concept of “schooling” to embrace a youth-sector approach that brings the time and resources of all youth-serving public agencies, community-based nonprofits, and family-engaged organizations to the task of creating sustained expanded learning opportunities in communities of concentrated poverty. We recognize that education is one of many drivers of social equity, but our commitment to universal public

education remains the single largest collective investment—in dollars and human capital—to that end.

THE CURRENT STATE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN AMERICA

Economic and Spatial Dimensions

Huge and increasing numbers of American children live in poverty today. Sixteen million children live below the poverty line, and 22 million children live in households where no parent has full-time employment.⁵ Additionally, these children and their families are increasingly living in economically segregated communities. From 2000 to 2007, family income segregation grew in almost all metropolitan areas, extending a trend since 1970. Indeed, in 1970, 15 percent of families were in neighborhoods that were classified as either affluent (with median incomes greater than 150 percent of the median income for the metropolitan area) or poor (median incomes less than 67 percent of metropolitan median income). By 2007, this percentage more than doubled—31 percent of families lived in neighborhoods that were either affluent or poor.⁶

Racial Segregation

American families are also increasingly living in racially segregated neighborhoods. Black children are three times more likely to be poor than white or Asian children, and they are six times more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty (i.e., within census tracts with poverty rates of 30 percent or more). Latino and Native American children are similarly vulnerable. Native American children are six times more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty, while Latino children are five times more likely.⁷ Racial segregation, in combination with a concentration of poverty and growing economic inequality, results in increased isolation of poor minority households.

Concentrated poverty and racial segregation produce and exacerbate a range of problems and privileges within different neighborhoods and populations. The effect of concentration contributes to a clear divide in terms of access to much needed and deeply valued community resources, institutions, and infrastructure, such as decent housing, medical facilities, employment, safe neighborhoods, and well-resourced schools. The average white student attends a school where poor students account for one-quarter to one-third of overall enrollment. The typical black or Hispanic student, in comparison,

attends a school where nearly two-thirds of their peers are low income.⁸ Not surprisingly, on every tangible measure—from qualified teachers to curriculum offerings—schools serving greater numbers of students of color have significantly fewer resources than schools serving mostly white students. Racial and economic segregation not only shapes opportunities that have an impact on one’s life chances, but the impact is transferred across generations. Increased inequality divides us both socially and physically.

Educational Dimension of This Ecology

As we discussed above, the impact of increased isolation leads to disparate access to valued resources and institutions, including educational opportunity. The result is a widening of achievement gaps. The gap, based on standardized test scores, between children from high- and low-income families born in 2001 is roughly 30 percent to 40 percent larger than among those born in 1970s.⁹ As well, the college-completion rate among children from more affluent families has grown sharply in the last few decades, while the completion rate for students from less affluent families has remained almost stagnant.¹⁰ And students from more affluent families make up an increasing percentage of the enrollment at the most selective colleges and universities, even when compared with students from less affluent families with similar test scores and academic records.¹¹ The connection between poverty and academic achievement has never been so plain.

To understand the achievement gap, we must consider a whole range of factors in children’s lives beyond the quality of schools that contribute to “unequal growing up.” These factors include access to high-quality preschool, enrichment activities, medical care, housing stability, trauma, and more. The growth and concentration of child poverty dramatically increase the need for educational interventions and supplemental services, thereby increasing the cost of improving student outcomes.¹² In areas with concentrated poverty, additional resources are often limited. And in recent years, there has been declining political support for dedicating those resources to building the capacity of school- and youth-serving organizations in high-poverty communities.¹³

Following on these dismal statistics, the national Equity and Excellence Commission has issued a scathing indictment of our schools: “America has become an outlier nation in the way we fund, govern, and administer K–12 schools, and also in terms of performance. No other developed nation has

inequities nearly as deep or systemic; no other developed nation has, despite some efforts to the contrary, so thoroughly stacked the odds against so many of its children. Sadly, what feels so very un-American turns out to be distinctly American.¹⁴

Access to Learning Opportunities Beyond School Hours

Growth in income inequality means that more affluent families now have far more resources (money, *time*, and knowledge), relative to less affluent families, to invest in their children's development and schooling. Research demonstrates that more affluent families are increasingly investing their resources in providing cognitively stimulating experiences from early child-care, preschool, through high school and beyond. Economists report that the amount of money high-income families spend per year on enrichment activities for their children (e.g., weekend and afterschool sports, dance and music lessons, tutors, etc.) has increased at a greater rate than the amount spent by low-income families: a \$2,700 difference per year in the early 1970s, compared to a \$7,500 difference in 2006. In 1972, Americans at the upper end of the income spectrum were spending five times as much per child as low-income families. By 2007, that gap had grown to nine times as much per child.¹⁵ A more recent study found that the wealthiest top 10 percent of households, after adjusting for inflation, tripled their total spending on expanded learning opportunities for their children, from \$3,000 in the early 1970s to \$9,000 in 2010.¹⁶ In contrast, spending among households in the bottom 20 percent increased by \$152 in inflation-adjusted dollars from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, and has remained at this level since that time.¹⁷

Similarly, since 1975, the amount of time that college-educated parents spend with their children has grown twice as fast as it has among less-educated parents.¹⁸ Children from high-income families will spend as many as thirteen hundred more hours, between birth and age six, than children from low-income families on enrichment activities such as music lessons, travel, and summer camp.¹⁹ While less affluent families are also increasing the time and money they invest in their children, they cannot keep up. A generation ago, children under age six from working-class backgrounds actually had slightly more time with their parents than children from upper-middle-class families. Today, that trend has reversed and the gap has grown to nearly an extra hour per day spent by higher-income parents with their children compared to lower-income parents. Lower-income families, which are now more

likely than ever to be headed by a single parent, are increasingly stretched for time.

The learning time gap continues to grow well beyond the early years of life. Estimates indicate that students from middle- and high-income families will have spent six thousand more hours in learning activities by the time they reach sixth grade—reading with their family, in preschool, weekend day trips, summer camp, and afterschool activities—than students from low-income families.²⁰

Indeed, few parents have afternoons and summers free to provide the safe, supportive places that their children need to study, explore, and pursue their passions under the supervision of caring adults. While many middle- and upper-income families create effective “workarounds,” buying and negotiating afterschool and summer experiences rich with extra learning opportunities like academic tutoring, music and art lessons, computer classes, organized sports, and more, less advantaged young people are left scrambling. A total of 11.3 million children (including 3 million elementary and middle-school-aged children) are without supervision between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., the hours in which young people are more likely to be engaged in risky behavior—either as victims or perpetrators. The unmet need for programs that would support their children in the risky hours after school and during the long summer months is greatest among low-income, black, and Hispanic families.²¹ Already facing many hurdles to achievement and healthy development, poor children are further disadvantaged as the opportunity gap between them and more advantaged young people grows wider.

POTENTIAL SCHOOL-BASED CONTRIBUTIONS TO MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

While the compounding effects of segregation, wealth inequalities, and diminished learning opportunities have demonstrably constrained the ability of schools to increase social equity, evidence indicates that time in school can still make a difference. For example, research shows that although the income achievement gap is already large by the time children enter kindergarten, it does not grow substantially during the school years. In fact, data demonstrate that schools may actually narrow academic achievement gaps.²² Research shows that the gap narrows for kindergarteners and first graders when they are in school, and widens in the summer between kindergarten and

first grade, when students are not in school. While the research can't speculate whether the trends hold for students in later grades, the data suggest that schools may reduce inequality. This finding is consistent with smaller studies that examine "summer learning loss."²³

Research also confirms that equitable access to learning opportunities can be advanced when educators are empowered to redesign how they organize work and time across the day and year. Based on a longitudinal mixed-methods analysis of over two hundred public schools in Chicago, researchers were able to identify a discrete set of school-based practices that promote student learning and improve organizational conditions for learning in high-poverty schools. Specifically, they found that schools that focused on professional and leadership capacity building, aligning student supports to academic learning goals, and on improving social conditions (parent-community partnerships, student-centered learning climate) experienced substantial growth in measures of student learning compared to those schools that did not attend to these organizational elements.²⁴ Providing educators with the time and space to actively engage in the establishment of learning goals and pedagogical strategies—through collaboration, the sharing of ideas, learning from others, and leading—contributes to these conditions.

Likewise, at the district and state levels, the research of Michael Fullan and others has elaborated on the importance of policy reforms that focus on fostering the professional capital and intrinsic motivation of teachers and students. Policies that build the capacity of teachers and school leaders to engage in continuous cycles of data-driven inquiry can positively reshape teaching and learning. Researchers are accumulating evidence that these types of reforms are the "right drivers" that yield demonstrably better organizational- and student-level outcomes for all students.²⁵ These processes and practices require redesigning and rethinking the school day and year to support professional capacity building.

These reform advances notwithstanding, the national Equity and Excellence Commission's own review suggested that schools, while an important part of the equity solution, cannot be expected to solve the problem alone.²⁶ Nor can we expect schools to solve the problem within our current conception or confines of the "traditional" school day. The US public education system's six-hour day and 180-day year fall far short of what most students need. This schedule provides far too little time for young people to meet the escalating educational requirements of work and citizenship. It is also woefully

out of sync with the lives of twenty-first-century families. This finding is not new. More than two decades ago, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning concluded that learning in America was “a prisoner of time,” where public schools “held time constant and let learning vary.”²⁷ Our prevailing school calendar was designed for a bygone era. As a consequence, the types of important advances in professional capacity building, effective teaching, and integrated student supports that we have previously described remained shackled to a nineteenth-century design. The consequences are felt most acutely in high-poverty neighborhoods, where even highly dedicated teachers and talented school leaders struggle to narrow the opportunity gap between their students and those from more affluent families.

In 2005, the Education Commission of the States revisited the National Education Commission’s 1994 report and found that the context surrounding public schools continued to change rapidly. Profound shifts were occurring in student demographics, technology, and the economy. The family was also experiencing rapid change as more women entered the labor market and more children were living in homes where both parents worked, or where the home was headed by a single working parent. Yet within schools, despite the shifting context, little has changed with respect to the way time for learning is conceived and organized. The nineteenth-century structural shackles remain firmly in place and gaps in complex, meaningful, and deeper learning opportunities between children in wealthy and poor neighborhoods continue to grow.²⁸

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND BEYOND: TOWARD EXPANDED AND BETTER CONCEIVED LEARNING TIME

Following on the review of the Equity and Excellence Commission, the education system we need must broaden what counts as learning and move beyond core academics to reach the social, emotional learning, and mind-sets that make for lifelong success. We also need a policy environment that engages the resources of entire communities and families in the task of transformative learning. According to researchers, adolescents are more likely to become fully engaged in their learning when they have the opportunity to immerse themselves in an area of interest, gain mastery in the interest area, and apply their learning in meaningful and authentic ways.²⁹ Students become engaged and learn at deeper levels, when they are invested in their

learning, form personal connections to the school community, and see educators as collaborators and mentors who model the principles of learning. Further, students become engaged in their learning when they identify educators both within and outside the school setting and are given an opportunity to learn in real-world settings where they can take on a variety of roles and responsibilities. Giving youth a chance to learn in these real-world settings allows them to develop essential career and life skills (e.g., leadership, responsibility, critical thinking, collaboration, persistence, problem solving, communication skills, emotional skills, etc.). Importantly, students' acquisition of these skills and knowledge readies them for success in the adult world. This kind of learning can give them a wide range of postsecondary options and mobility. These skills provide the capacities to function effectively in the complex and changing world; they foster important social competencies and promote economic mobility. An education that fosters these relevant skills enables youth to be more effective within all aspects of their lives, including college, career, and community participation.

The chapters in this volume make the case that what we need are concerted, whole-community efforts to make expanded learning time the “new normal” in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Schools, local public agencies, nonprofit community partners, researchers, advocates, and policy reformers must work together to create longer, better school days and years—making every minute count to close the opportunity gaps and address the learning needs of young people and the lives of their families.

SHIFTING POLICIES FOR EXPANDED, REDESIGNED LEARNING TIME FOR YOUTH IN POOR NEIGHBORHOODS

Unfortunately, during the last decade, the policy focus on standardized testing often undermined efforts to broaden learning opportunities, particularly for students in low-performing schools. High-stakes accountability testing pushed many schools and teachers to teach to tests and focus on basic skills, even when these practices conflicted with educators' beliefs about the best approaches for student learning. This effect has been particularly intense for teachers in low-performing schools where pressures to raise test scores and avoid sanctions are highest.³⁰ As schools became more test focused, students had fewer places to turn for this critical skill development and enrichment. These policies widened the opportunity gap even further as they stood in

stark contrast to what research from across a range of fields has demonstrated or reconfirmed: that students learn best through active, meaningful socially mediated activity.³¹

By the time the Education Commission of the States revisited the *Prisoner of Time* report in 2005, the policy environment for expanded learning time had begun to shift in important ways. Community-based organizations (CBOs) and nonprofits in different parts of the United States were organizing and taking action to develop new models of community-school collaboration to expand learning opportunities for low-income youth. Leveraging philanthropic support from such groups as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and The Atlantic Philanthropies, afterschool advocates were able to persuade Congress to build afterschool funding into the No Child Left Behind law in 2001. Funding for afterschool programs jumped from \$40 million to approximately \$1 billion in the first year and grew to an average of \$1.9 billion in federal grants to the states between 2002 and 2007. In California, this public investment was accelerated with the passage of Proposition 49 in 2002, which provided a dedicated funding stream for afterschool programs independent of the annual education budget. In the high school space, small-schools grants from the Gates Foundation, as well as from regional funders like the James Irvine Foundation, began to support the incubation of new college- and career-ready schools in partnerships with CBOs and local employers. More recently, the Obama administration—with backing from grantees of the Ford Foundation’s More and Better Learning Time initiative and others—helped to champion the Full-Service Community Schools program (2009) and Promise Neighborhoods (2010), bringing them into the federal budget and cementing expanded learning time as a centerpiece of national education equity policy. In California, policy makers similarly moved to embrace funding for expanded learning time through the creation of the California Career Pathways Trust (2014), and new support for community schools through the 2016 amendments to the Learning Communities for School Success Program.

A related development in support of expanded learning time strategies is the broad definition of learning in the new Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), as well as the new law’s wide inclusion of schools, families, and out-of-school partners in shared accountability for advancing student learning. This change in federal law represents a clear departure from the approach

to school reform that prevailed in the two decades between 1994 and 2015, which focused almost exclusively on student proficiency in English language arts and math.

Beginning in 2010, and in response to the negative consequences of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reforms on low-income minority-serving schools, forty-five states (and six major California districts) received NCLB waivers to voluntarily develop comprehensive plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, increase equity, and aim for universal college, career, and civic readiness. This shift, cemented in the 2015 ESSA reforms, reflected a growing consensus that if young people were to achieve their full potential, they needed to develop a range of skills, competencies, and academic knowledge. Policy makers have begun to recognize that while academic mastery is important, so too are certain social and emotional dispositions and mind-sets associated with learning, such as growth mind-set, intellectual openness, self-management, and empathy.³² As well, full human development and the more specific demands of college, career, and civic readiness require competency in transferring or adapting what one learns in school to a lifelong series of new social and work-based situations, problems, and creative challenges. This last set of learning objectives requires the cultivation of more complex and deeper learning skills related to critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and effective communication.

A NEW SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PARADIGM: LOCAL FLEXIBILITY, CONTROL, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In addition to adopting college and career readiness as the guiding star for student performance, the ESSA signals a shift in federal policy to allow states, school districts, and local educators greater flexibility in how they may use federal program funds to support state and local school improvement efforts. In California, for example, state leaders followed suit and have begun to design a resource-allocation and school accountability strategy that banks on greater local control over how district and school leaders may use fiscal resources to promote innovation and advance equitable student access to more meaningful and deeper learning opportunities. An important outcome of this shift to local control is that federal and state policy makers are no longer bypassing county and district leaders to impose reform demands directly on schools. Now, district offices are being asked to take a central role in planning

for change and in devising strategies for school improvement. These new federal and state rules (e.g., the Local Control and Accountability Plan in California) require the engagement of families and local community stakeholders in the design and execution of district-led reforms through new review processes designed to promote shared accountability.

This new decentralization policy comes with additional or more flexible resources to support and scale up the work of expanded time partners who engage with schools across the school day and afterschool hours. ESSA Title I dollars, for example, can now be more flexibly spent to support expanded learning and early-learning strategies that focus on equitable results. And, pending a policy reversal by the Trump administration, new or more flexible assistance is also being made available to school partners through the reauthorization of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the Promise Neighborhoods programs, and the Full-Service Community Schools initiative in conjunction with ESSA.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EXPANDED LEARNING TIME, INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS, AND EQUITY

The policy focus on universal college, career, and civic readiness and the broad learning objectives that it implies is a game changer. Most obviously, the understanding that college, career, and civic readiness require a range of skills beyond academic mastery has been a long-standing cornerstone of the movement to expand learning opportunities through the combined efforts of school and community partnerships during and beyond the typical school day. In this sense, the policy community has finally caught up. Likewise, the move in many districts across the country (e.g., the California CORE districts) to expand formal accountability systems beyond academic mastery promises to bring schools and their community-based partners under a single accountability umbrella. By including measures such as social and emotional learning and school culture and climate, schools and partners focus on shared learning objectives. This has positive implications for joint efforts at professional and program development that bring teachers and community partners into common learning spaces. State and federal efforts to provide more dollars and flexible spending rules for schools in low-income communities mean new opportunities for expanded and differentiated programming to meet the needs of diverse communities and to advance equitable access to deeper learning opportunities. As the new Trump administration takes the

reins in Washington, the outlook is for a continued trend toward local control, albeit with a new emphasis on resources for local innovation through charter schools and market-based mechanisms.

In sum, expanded learning time strategies are now in the mainstream of the new accountability discussion. This represents great opportunity and responsibility for all who care about the education of our youth and the perfection of our democracy through education. And finally, local control (or flexibility) means that districts and schools will need to build system-learning capacity. They will need to pivot away from a reflexive focus on data use for state and federal rule compliance, and move toward data use that is linked to local strategies and that supports their continuous learning about how best to expand opportunity for low-income and minority youth. This new focus offers the opportunity for districts, school leaders, and their community partners to take local context and needs into account as they fashion policy solutions, especially in the area of student supports that require attention to local demographics, economic conditions, and opportunities.

CREATING AN ECOLOGY OF EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Grounded in new and existing research, this book features practical models, political strategies, and cultural shifts that contribute to reorganizing work and time in public schools. A central focus is the conditions that enable high-poverty schools to provide learning experiences comparable to those of more advantaged students whose life experiences and schools make high achievement likely.

We have organized the chapters into three sections. The chapters in the first section provide examples of what is possible when school and system leaders look beyond the traditional school day and year to meet the needs of all students. Those in the second section explore why approaches that expand and reorganize time have the potential to support the learning that all students deserve—learning that is meaningful, complex, deep, and engaging. The authors investigate how the strategies introduced in the first section of the book more accurately conceptualize students' learning, and how these approaches can achieve more equitable outcomes by bringing together K–12 schools, community organizations, and a range of partners. The chapters in the final section delve more deeply into the technical, cultural, and political obstacles facing expanding learning time approaches. Together, the chapters

in this volume provide evidence that giving students more and better learning time can support increased learning for a diverse student population and can respond to our pressing societal need to address growing inequalities. The question is, are we willing to move beyond the traditional day or year to provide students with the opportunities they need to become fully engaged in their learning, tap into their interests, and ensure their preparation for college, career, and civic life?

A CALL TO ACTION

The impact of “unequal growing up” has serious consequences for young people, their families, communities, and our nation by exacerbating social inequalities. In a society that promises poor children little more than a public school education, we must turn to the school infrastructure, alongside community services, to provide opportunities to improve their lives and life chances. We are not naive about the ability of schools to buffer children from the harms of poverty, isolation, and discrimination, but providing more and better learning time is a place to begin.

The chapters in this book provide examples of more and better learning time in practice; they offer theoretical and empirical explanations for why and how these ways of using time “work.” Together, they supply a set of evidence-based principles to guide policy makers, educators, and community leaders as they develop and sustain innovations that exploit time as a key resource for equitable and effective schools. With this knowledge and the new flexibility in ESSA, it’s time to move forward, bringing these principles to scale by creating local instantiations of more and better schooling that give the nation’s least advantaged children opportunities to learn and thrive.

Yet moving this work forward will require courage and persistence. As propitious as this moment is, in terms of readiness and momentum, it could be lost. Some see the pendulum swing of the Trump administration as a death knell for comprehensive, public efforts to disrupt poverty and advance equity. As this book goes to press, we’ve had a good first look, in the form of the president’s first budget proposals, at the values and principles that will drive the administration’s agenda for education policy and social policy more generally. Those budget proposals are not encouraging. In addition to calling for deep cuts to the US Department of Education, the proposals turn dramatically away from a willingness to battle inequality with federal authority and dollars. It makes clear the Trump preference for private- over

public-sector solutions; individual, rather than collective responsibility; and the elimination of school-related services for poor children (such as meals and afterschool programs) that can't be tied to the efficient production of specific outcomes. On the chopping block, for example, is \$1.2 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which has been at the heart of providing expanded learning time opportunities. These specifics of the initial budget proposals may not survive, but the less-than-generous spirit behind them surely will.

Policy makers, educators, and equity-minded community leaders cannot yield to this view. So in addition to sharing the knowledge we and the chapter authors have gained over the past decade of good and hard work, we must also share our commitment to continue. We intend to work locally and through state policy to secure the gains that have been made and to press ahead, knowing that the American people believe in the promise of an outstanding education as a pathway to better lives and a better country. We call on readers of this book to join us and persist.