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Policy Brief

Moving Toward a Longer, Smarter
School Day and School Year

by Jill Gottfred | Summer 2012



ILLINOIS NETWORK OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

The INCS Action Research Series is designed to improve public education by recommending policy and practice changes that benefit all public school students. Unlike traditional policy briefs that assess programs descriptively and often call for additional research, INCS Action Research highlights charter schools and their innovative practices to challenge how schools and their systems operate. Charter schools are pioneering new ways of creating public schools and delivering instruction, all with an eye toward improving student outcomes. It is our hope that this series will test assumptions about the provision of public education and keep charter school innovation at the forefront of the school reform dialogue nationally. In the context of the recent debate concerning Chicago's move toward a longer school day, this brief shares six successful approaches currently used by Illinois charter schools to implement a longer, smarter school day and school year – approaches that have the potential to yield positive results for all public school students.

MOVING TOWARD A LONGER, SMARTER SCHOOL DAY AND SCHOOL YEAR

Chicago is at a crossroads. For the past decade, most Chicago Public School (CPS) students spent only five hours and 45 minutes in school for a 170-day school year—the shortest school day and school year among the 50 largest urban school districts in the country. Now, under the auspices of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, CPS has reached an agreement to extend the school day to seven hours for elementary school students and 7.5 hours for high school students for a 180-day school year. Mayor Emanuel made this a hallmark of his first term despite a severe budget challenge and pushback from the Chicago Teachers Union. What has yet to be determined is exactly how this time will be utilized to benefit children across the Chicago public school system.

Lengthening the school day is a step in the right direction to improve our schools; however more action is needed. This fall, as CPS hires additional teachers to staff the longer school day and school year, CPS must ensure that this extended learning time is used wisely. As the district, principals, and teachers work to put the changes into action, we can learn from a number of charter public schools in Illinois that have already succeeded in implementing a longer school day and school year in a way that maximizes positive impact for students. This brief seeks to share their innovative approaches for the benefit of the broader education community, fulfilling the charter mission of serving as laboratories of innovation. Illinois charter public schools demonstrate the impact that is possible when more learning time is built in to the academic school calendar, and when school leaders have the autonomy to tailor a longer schedule to best meet the needs of each school community.

Some critics have claimed that lengthening the school day might not lead to better results for students. Under this view, scarce resources might be better spent on teacher training, smaller class sizes, or other efforts. But this sets up a false choice. Abundant research indicates that we can achieve a longer school day while simultaneously fighting for a new approach to teacher quality, enhanced student engagement, and other factors that correlate directly with student achievement.

Moving Toward a Longer, Smarter School Day and School Year examines five Illinois public schools that are successfully implementing a longer school day and school year for their students and teachers. This brief explores six approaches employed by these schools, including tangible and intangible qualities that contribute to their successes. Our intention is to help CPS schools—and schools across the country—replicate their successful approaches, and tailor extended learning time to meet the unique needs of each school.



The five featured public schools share a number of significant characteristics. All of the schools feature implementation at the school level—school leaders have the autonomy to choose the length of their day and year, among other autonomies, in exchange for being held accountable for their students' academic performance. All interviewed school leaders agree that a longer school day and school year, relative to the former CPS schedule, is necessary to achieve their ambitious academic and enrichment goals for their students. Like traditional CPS schools, the featured schools serve predominantly African-American and Hispanic students from low-income families and the school facilities are all located in predominantly low-income communities. Each featured school implements a schedule that is centered on a unique school mission, and ultimately achieves dramatically accelerated academic results.

Extending the school day is necessary but not sufficient; CPS must allow schools the autonomy to tailor a longer school day to meet the needs of the students it serves and teachers it employs

A longer school day provides students with more time for learning, and teachers with more time to prepare. With more time, teachers and administrators can: ensure that students are achieving ambitious goals in all subject areas; restore enrichment classes; build in recess and/or physical education; facilitate internship and apprenticeship programs; and schedule time for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture. Principals of each school should tailor their school schedule to meet the mission of their school.

CPS must extend the school year, and allow schools the autonomy to tailor added school days to meet the needs of the students it serves and teachers it employs

Between 1974 and 2012, CPS reduced the amount of instructional days scheduled in the school year from 180 to 170 school days. As CPS returns to a full 180-day school year, the extra 10 days will be pivotal for building a strong school culture, particularly at the start and end of the school year. Successful schools explicitly take days at the beginning of the year to implement school rules, practice school routines, and build community and culture in the school. Principals should have autonomy to schedule a productive school year for its school community.

CPS must provide its schools with tools for effective teacher professional development, teacher preparation, and collaborative teacher planning time

Excellent schools require excellent teachers. CPS must invest time and resources for professional development for teachers, and allow teachers time during the school day to prepare quality lessons and collaborate with other teachers and staff to maximize effectiveness in the classroom. Especially now, as CPS works to implement a more rigorous set of Common Core Standards, more time for adults to collaborate is critical for achieving strong academic outcomes for children. Ensuring that each school is equipped with sufficient time and resources for investing in teachers is necessary for maintaining successful schools.

Moving Toward a Longer, Smarter School Day and School Year provides five school-based case studies designed to draw the maximum amount of pertinent information from a small, purposive sample of schools and stakeholders in those schools. The Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) conducted extensive interviews with a dozen public charter schools in Illinois that have an extended school day and school year. Of the 12 schools interviewed, five schools were chosen that represent a diverse cross section of schools including: elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools; varying locations inside Chicago and outside of Chicago; single campuses and network charter schools; and varying philosophies on how to utilize extended learning time. All data reported for each school is from the 2011–2012 school year. The core lesson of these interviews is that a relentless focus on teacher quality and a focus on implementation are essential to ensure that the longer school day and school year drives positive academic outcomes.

SIX APPROACHES OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS USING EXTENDED TIME

The featured schools present diverse solutions for utilizing extended learning time effectively and efficiently. Their mission statements, their specific tactics and goals, and the size and composition of their student bodies vary widely. Nevertheless, six consistent themes are featured in all of the schools. These themes were not manifested in the same way at every school, but they shaped the environment in all five case studies. In some ways, these common approaches set the featured schools apart from other schools in the state; and by highlighting them, INCS hopes to demonstrate what is possible with a longer school day and year.

All schools featured in this brief outperform schools similarly situated in the district in a variety of metrics. The two featured K–8 schools, Alain Locke Charter School and Namaste Charter School, outperform comparison schools on the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT): in 2011, 87% of Namaste students, and 91% of Alain Locke students, met or exceeded state standards on the ISAT compared with 73% of students across CPS. The two featured high schools have remarkable high school graduation and college enrollment data: in 2011, 93% of Perspectives Charter School graduates enrolled in college, nearly 90% of whom are the first in their families on track to earn a college degree. EPIC Academy Charter High School will see its first class of students graduate next spring, and at the close of the first trimester of the 2010–2011 school year, 93% of EPIC high school students were on-track for graduation. 8 Points Charter School, the newest school featured, has shown early signs of strength through above average marks in meeting growth targets in 100% of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment areas of mathematics, science, reading and language usage.

1 More time for differentiated instruction on core subjects

All public schools teach reading, writing, math, science, and history. However, schools have varying philosophies on how much time should be allotted to each, and how integrated subjects should be. Schools featured have given extensive thought to this matter, and have strategically built in extended learning time for the core subjects according to the needs of their students. For instance, some school leaders learned, early in the school year, that many of their students were enrolling in their school several grade levels behind in reading, writing and/or math, often times reaching three to four grade levels behind. More time during the school day to address these deficits is critical to bringing students up to speed in lagging subjects.

2 More time for teacher professional development, preparation, and collaboration

Time devoted to developing and retaining excellent teachers is time well spent. Effective professional development for teachers in areas including teaching methodologies, data analysis, and curriculum, can lead to higher student academic achievement and low teacher turnover. Much evidence points to the value of dedicated time for collaboration, for example a study of 47 schools that demonstrated an increase in reading and math scores when teachers work in partnership on a regular basis.¹

3 More time for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture

All schools featured use extended time in the day and year for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture. This occurs in varying forums, but a meaningful advisory period at the beginning or end of the day is a common approach for accomplishing this. Also, scheduling time in the day to facilitate consistent interactions with the same group of peers and adult mentors is critical for supporting healthy social-emotional development. The featured schools have taken on the responsibility to serve their students beyond core academic areas, and have invested time in developing responsible leaders to deliver this support.

4 More time for physical fitness and/or recess

Rigorous academic programs without time for physical movement can lead to mental burnout and fatigue.² Featured schools have built in time in the school day for physical fitness class and/or recess. Schools vary in how structured this time is, but all interviewed school leaders agree that time for physical movement during the school day is critical for maintaining student focus during seated classroom time. Research supports that time for recess can affect the amount of time students' focus on learning during class time.³

5 More time for enrichment opportunities

Short school days, in conjunction with high stakes testing and budget cuts, have resulted in cutting enrichment classes and programs that tap into creative and practical learning styles of many students. More time for classes in the arts, foreign language, and technology helps to ensure students are receiving a well-rounded education that is preparing them for future endeavors outside of the classroom. A full school day allows more time for students to engage in opportunities that build real-life skills and promote productive community involvement. As the global job market becomes increasingly more competitive, we must ensure that our students are set up for success with meaningful academic and job skills beyond graduation.

6 More time for building meaningful relationships with community partners

Members of the business, academic, and non-profit communities are eager to work with youth in the public school system. Featured schools have maximized learning experiences and learning time by engaging these community partners to mentor and teach their students. A longer school day, and more school days, can open the door for students to engage with caring members of the outside community and gain practical skills.



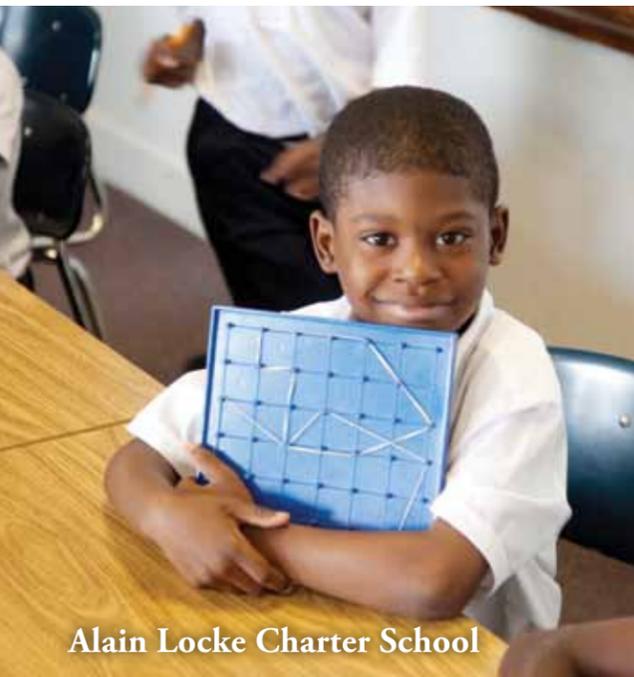
PROFILES OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS



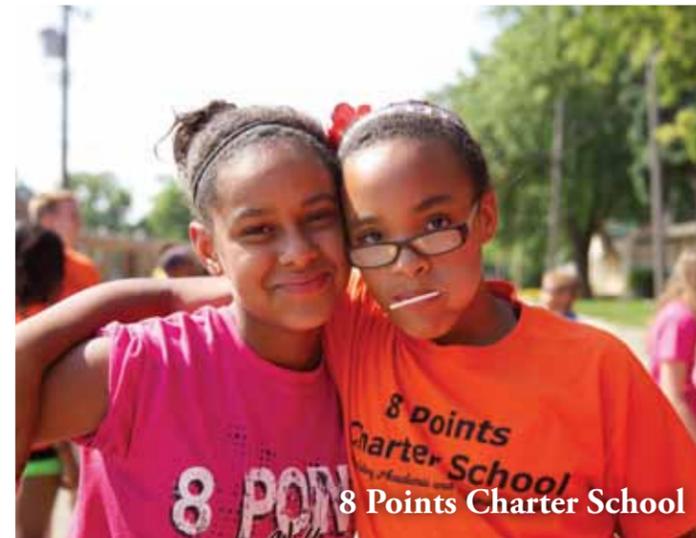
Namaste Charter School



Perspectives Charter School



Alain Locke Charter School



8 Points Charter School



EPIC Academy Charter High School

NAMASTE CHARTER SCHOOL

Grades: K–8

3737 South Paulina, Chicago, IL 60609

	Namaste	CPS
School Start Time	8:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.
School End Time	4:00 p.m.	2:45 p.m.
Academic School Days	180	170
Total School Days	196	180

Sample School Day

7:45–8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30–9:00 a.m.	Morning Meeting or Advisory: Morning Movement/Character Education
9:00–11:15 a.m.	Literacy (includes snack and bathroom break)
11:15–11:45 a.m.	Math Concept Development
11:45 a.m.–12:10 p.m.	Recess
12:15–12:40 p.m.	Lunch
12:40–1:20 p.m.	Math Problem Solving and Center Work
1:20–2:00 p.m.	Writer’s Workshop
2:00–3:00 p.m.	Project Based Science/Social Studies
3:00–4:00 p.m.	Physical Education and Development

About Namaste Charter School

Namaste Charter School’s mission is to serve students by combining “health and wellness with academic rigor in a peaceful environment.” To meet this mission, school leaders devote extended time to focus on rigorous academic core subjects, lesson time centered on aspects of personal wellness and peace, and extensive time for students to engage in physical activity. Namaste currently serves 450 kindergarten—8th grade students and their families.

Namaste’s school year is based on a trimester calendar. School leaders strategically schedule a shortened summer break to alleviate learning loss that typically occurs when students are out of school for a long summer break.

More time for differentiated instruction on core subjects

Namaste schedules a two-hour literacy block, and at least a one-hour math block every day. During literacy block, extended learning time is critical in facilitating guided reading groups, and providing differentiated instruction for all levels of reading. Teachers have autonomy to decide when to incorporate social studies and science lessons into the literacy and math curriculum, depending on the needs and interests of the students. Teachers at Namaste agree that extended time for core subjects is key to adequately serving all of their students.

More time for teacher preparation and collaboration

Namaste prioritizes giving teachers ample preparation and collaboration time throughout the school day. Every day, teachers have 110 minutes to prepare and collaborate with other teachers. While students are scheduled for 50 minutes of lunch and recess, all teachers have this time ‘duty free’ and are able to use the time as they see fit.

On Fridays, students are released at 1:30 p.m., and they have the option to attend an after-school program at the nearby YMCA. At this time, teachers stay for professional development and work time between 2 p.m. and 4:15 p.m. Between early dismissal Fridays and teacher work days, Namaste designated 128 hours of professional development for teachers and staff throughout the 2011–2012 school year.

More time for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture

To facilitate building strong school community and school culture, all Namaste 7th and 8th grade students report to an advisory period for 45 minutes at the beginning of each school day. Advisory period provides a safe place where students meet with a consistent group of peers and an adult to engage in guided social-emotional conversations. Also, at the beginning of the school day, K–6th graders engage in ‘Morning Movement’—a physical activity routine that helps students transition into the school day. Each Morning Movement ends with students declaring the Namaste motto.

To realize their mission for creating a peaceful environment, the Namaste staff developed “Peaceful People,” a character education and conflict resolution program that seeks to foster positive community relationships. Peaceful People is taught via direct instruction during a weekly 30-minute lesson in grades K–4, while 5–8 students engage in age-appropriate instruction during the homeroom and/or advisory block. During Peaceful People lessons, students learn about the five core social skills that serve as a foundation for peace: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-Control (C.A.R.E.S. skills).

More time for physical education and/or recess

Namaste prioritizes physical fitness and wellness for its students. Students at Namaste engage in 60 minutes of physical education Monday through Thursday, and 40 minutes of physical education on Friday. In addition, students participate in 25 minutes of recess every day.

Namaste invests in hiring a full-time recess coach through an organization called Playworks. The recess coach hosts a 30-minute lesson once a week in each K–4 classroom that teaches and reviews rules, games played at recess, as well as behavioral expectations for students during recess time.

More time for enrichment opportunities

In addition to prioritizing academic rigor throughout the school day, Namaste provides enrichment opportunities that will help students succeed beyond the classroom. Namaste collaborates with Spark, a national nonprofit organization to facilitate an 8-week internship program for their 8th graders. Each student in the Spark Chicago program is paired with a mentor professional in a career field in which the student is interested in. Students work with their mentor for two hours per week. Professional mentors include attorneys, pastry chefs, personal shoppers, and sports managers, among others. Students also participate in the Spark curriculum for one and a half hours per week, where students debrief their weekly internship experience, and work on leadership, interview, and job skills. Students report that their experience in the Spark program has helped to prepare them with the high school application process.

2011–2012 School Calendar

Trimester	Start Date	End Date
Trimester 1	August 22	November 18
Trimester 2	November 28	March 16
Trimester 3	April 13	June 29
6 week summer break		



Six Approaches to Utilizing Extended Learning Time Well: At a Glance

Six Approaches	School's Innovative Practice(s)
Extended time on core subjects	At least 120 minutes of literacy/day and 60 minutes of math/day. Social studies and science varies.
Extended time for professional development, teacher preparation, and collaboration	110 minutes daily
Time for building leadership skills, community, and culture	45 minute daily advisory period, “Morning Movement”, Peaceful People Program
Time for physical education/recess	85 minutes daily
Time for enrichment course(s)	Internships, wellness, and nutrition classes
Time for engaging community partners	Playworks, University of Chicago, YMCA, Spark Chicago

PERSPECTIVES CHARTER SCHOOL

Grades: 6–12

Rodney D. Joslin Campus
1930 S. Archer Avenue, Chicago, IL 60616

Perspectives Middle Academy
Perspectives High School of Technology
Perspectives Leadership Academy
8131 S. May Street, Chicago, IL 60620

Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy
3663 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, IL 60653

	Perspectives	CPS
School Start Time	8:15 a.m.	9:00 a.m.
School End Time	3:45 p.m.	2:45 p.m.
Academic School Days	181	170
Total School Days	186	180

Sample School Day

7:45–8:10 a.m.	Breakfast
8:15–8:30 a.m.	Advisory
8:35–9:20 a.m.	English Literature
9:25–10:10 a.m.	English Composition
10:15–11:00 a.m.	Science
11:05–11:50 a.m.	Social Studies
11:55 a.m.–12:25 p.m.	Lunch
12:30–1:15 p.m.	Math
1:20–2:05 p.m.	Agile Mind Math
2:10–2:55 p.m.	Foreign Language/Elective
3:00–3:45 p.m.	ADL

About Perspectives Charter School

Perspectives Charter School was started in 1997 by two traditional Chicago Public School teachers serving 35 students, and has since expanded to five campuses serving over 2,500 students. All Perspectives Charter Schools provide students with a rigorous and relevant education, based on *A Disciplined Life*® (ADL), that prepares them for life in a changing world and helps them become intellectually reflective, caring, and ethical people engaged in a meaningful life. Perspectives staff incorporates the 26 principles of ADL into everyday learning throughout the school year.

More time for differentiated instruction on core subjects

Perspectives implements a blended learning model for all core subjects, which combines face-to-face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach. For instance, each student has a 90-minute math block in their schedule every day. For the latter 45 minutes, teachers use computer programs, such as Odyssey and Accelerated Math, to fill in gaps for students who have not achieved mastery, or to accelerate learning for students who have mastered a particular skill. Skill-based, differentiated computer programs allow for tailored instruction and practice, as well as easy, nuanced tracking of student academic data. Between direct teacher instruction and computer-aided instruction, students get about 28 exposures to a concept, the average amount needed before achieving mastery.

Perspectives schedules a 90-minute literacy block for all students every day. Perspectives developed an ‘advantage hour’ to maximize this time by grouping students according to academic ability, either in an accelerated program or remediation program.

More time for teacher preparation and collaboration

Perspectives teachers and staff are arranged in grade level and subject matter Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and are given 90 minutes per day to prepare and collaborate. Teachers also receive extra time on Fridays to pursue professional development and engage in common planning from 1–4 p.m.

PLCs at Perspectives are focused around three big ideas: 1) Student learning; 2) Collaboration among adults; and 3) Student achievement results. Perspectives focuses on six instructional initiatives, and each school identifies two initiatives that will be the priorities for the year. The six initiatives are: formative assessments, ADL culture, higher order thinking, non-fiction literacy (reading and writing), meticulous planning, and differentiated instruction. All professional development and staff rubrics are centered on these six initiatives, with an emphasis on the two priority initiatives for the year.

More time for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture

Central to Perspectives’ mission is the ADL education model. Perspectives builds in 60 minutes a day, three days a week, for an advisory period that addresses each of the 26 ADL principles, which help build strong ethical character and academic responsibility. Students are in the same advisory all four years, and spend advisory time looking at academic data, learning strategies for solving conflicts, taking self-perception surveys, and reflecting on strengths and weaknesses.

Freshmen at Perspectives start the school year in Freshman Academy—a one-week course to get accustomed to the ADL school culture and to build relationships with new peers.

To prepare students for college, juniors and seniors at Perspectives spend about 180 minutes a week in a college prep course. During this time students research college scholarships, write a legacy paper, create a 5-year plan, and brainstorm ways to give back to the community.

More time for physical education and/or recess

Perspectives has a Healthy Lifestyles campaign, which facilitates a holistic approach to healthy food, health education, and physical education. Part of this campaign includes 45 hours of physical education classes per year, and 20 minutes of recess per day. In advisory, some classrooms implement 10–15 minutes of student-led yoga to begin the school day fresh and with open minds ready to engage in active learning. Teachers attest that this focus on healthy lifestyles helps students focus during extended classroom blocks.

More time for enrichment opportunities

Perspectives prioritizes time to connect students with professionals to gain practical career and life skills. During junior year, a Program Director matches students with professionals with similar interests. The school plans for 45 hours during the year to be dedicated to this program, including skill building in resume writing, business etiquette, and working off-site with matched mentor professionals.

At Perspectives Leadership Academy, a partnership with Ernst & Young provides students with access to mentoring programs, college access guidance, and scholarships for summer programs.

Sophomores are allotted 180 minutes a week to participate in Mikva Challenge, a Chicago non-profit dedicated to the development of civic leadership. Students take an “Issue to Action”, where students research, develop and act on opportunities to be agents of change in their community. Issues that students have tackled include homelessness, unemployment, and nutrition.

At Perspectives Middle Academy, the Elev8 program (sponsored by LISC and the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation) provides a robust assortment of after-school activities, along with mentoring during the school day and a school-based health center.

83% of Perspectives students participate in the after school programming, including sports, arts and music, that takes place from 4–6 p.m. every day. Unique to Perspectives/IIT is a rigorous Robotics Academy facilitated by the Illinois Institute for Technology (IIT) for middle school students. IIT staff creates and facilitates the after school curriculum, and prepares students for competing against other schools across the state.

2011–2012 School Calendar

Quarter	Start Date	End Date
Quarter 1	August 22	October 21
Quarter 2	October 24	December 23
Quarter 3	January 29	March 16
Quarter 4	March 16	June 8
8 week summer break/6 week summer program		



Six Approaches to Utilizing Extended Learning Time Well: At a Glance

Six Approaches	School's Innovative Practice(s)
Extended time on core subjects	90 minutes of math/day, 90 minutes of literacy/day, 50 minutes of science/day, and 50 minutes of social sciences/day
Extended time for professional development, teacher preparation, and collaboration	90 minutes of Professional Learning Community time/day, and 3 hours of professional development/week
Time for building leadership skills, community, and culture	Freshman Academy, A Disciplined Life(ADL) Advisory Period, school meetings and college prep course
Time for physical education/recess	20 minutes of recess/day, and 45 hours of physical education/year
Time for enrichment course(s)	Internship program, Community Action, field studies, healthy lifestyle course, and technology course
Time for engaging community partners	Ernst & Young, Elev8, Illinois Institute of Technology, Mikva Challenge

ALAIN LOCKE CHARTER SCHOOL

Grades: Pre K–8

3141 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60612

	Alain Locke	CPS
School Start Time	8:20 a.m.	9:00 a.m.
School End Time	5:00 p.m.	2:45 p.m.
Academic School Days	190	170
Total School Days	190	180

Sample School Day

8:30–9:10 a.m.	ELA (Core) Literacy and Writing
9:10–9:50 a.m.	ELA (Core)
9:50–10:30 a.m.	ELA (Core)
10:30–11:10 a.m.	Math
11:10–11:50 a.m.	Math
11:50 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	Library
12:30–1:30 p.m.	Lunch/recess
1:30–2:10 p.m.	Speech (Memory Pieces)
2:10–2:50 p.m.	Social Studies
2:50–3:30 p.m.	Computers
3:30–3:40 p.m.	Snack
3:40–4:20 p.m.	Music
4:20–4:55 p.m.	Homework review/study hall/AR reading

About Alain Locke Charter School

Alain Locke Charter School has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as one in seven schools in the nation most successful in closing the achievement gap. School leaders implement a strategically planned year-round calendar model. Students are in school for four 10-week quarters, with four 2–4 week breaks in between quarters. This schedule leads to less 'learning loss' than what typically occurs over a long summer break.

More time for differentiated instruction on core subjects

At Alain Locke, every minute counts during the school day. The academic focus is a rigorous curriculum committed to the mastery of core literacy and math skills. Students spend two hours a day in reading class, one hour a day in writing class, and an hour and a half a day in math class. More time for academic core subjects during the school day has enabled Alain Locke students to achieve and surpass state standards.

More time for teacher preparation and collaboration

Alain Locke has a high teacher retention rate partially due to the extended time it gives to teachers to prepare and collaborate with other staff. Teachers spend 80 minutes a day for preparation and collaboration time, totaling to seven hours per week of common planning time with team teachers. This preparation time is essential for smooth lessons and maximizing learning time with students in the classroom.

More time for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture

Alain Locke spends the first two weeks of Quarter 1 building positive school culture. Instructors first develop their expectations in the classroom. Then they teach, model, practice, and reinforce (or remind) the routines and procedures with students during the first two weeks of the school year. Teachers attest that frontloading the school year with practicing routines and team building exercises saves time later in the year. Strong routines and school culture lead to less time managing everyday tasks, such as passing out papers, and managing classroom behavior. Expectations are clear from day one, leading to a more efficient school year.

Every Friday, Alain Locke schedules time for Upper Grade Seminars for 7th and 8th grade-level community meetings. At these meetings, students split up in to boys and girls groups, and are offered a space to discuss personal successes and challenges.

An 8th grade teacher at Alain Locke created and implemented a Mentorship Group Program to help 7th and 8th grade students develop social and personal skills and habits they can use throughout their lifetime. Each of the staff mentors, who volunteer to participate, serves as a guide and a role model for four to six upper grade students to help them throughout their transition to college prep high school. They facilitate one hour weekly mentorship meetings that focus on social and personal life skills, such as study skills, organization, attitude, self-confidence, self-control, as well as help them work toward their personal and academic goals. Building in trusted time with an adult helps students stay engaged and holds adults in the building accountable for every student.

Part of Alain Locke's mission is to prepare their students for success beyond high school, in college and careers. To accomplish this, the school has invested in a full-time College and Career Counselor who meets with 5th–8th graders in groups and in one-on-one sessions. 8th grade students meet with the counselor for approximately 40 minutes per week. The 5th–7th grade students spend approximately 20 minutes per week completing various activities focused on college and career planning as well as exploring various career possibilities.

More time for physical education and/or recess

Alain Locke schedules 30 minutes for recess every day for all students. Since the academic courses are very rigorous, administrators place great importance on scheduling time in the school day for students to unwind and socialize in a supervised recess setting. 4th–8th grade students also participate in intramural sports during recess period.

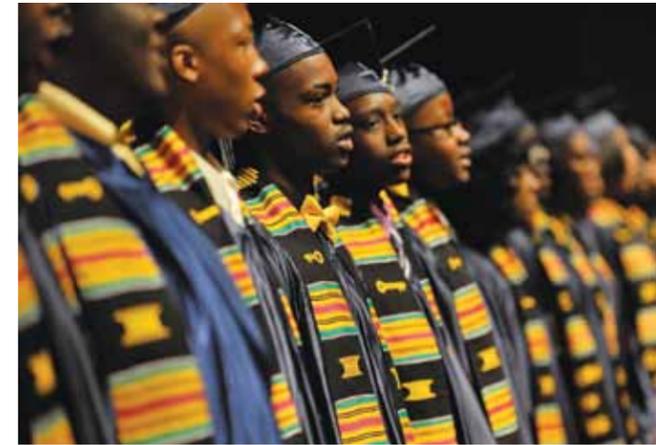
More time for enrichment opportunities

Alain Locke employs full-time art, technology, foreign language, music, and physical education instructors to ensure a well-rounded curriculum is in place for all students. Enrichment teachers are encouraged to incorporate field experiences in all enrichment courses. For instance, students in art class will venture to the Art Institute of Chicago to deepen their studies of the subject matter.

Every Friday there is a 2.5 hour Friday Club Day, where each grade participates in enrichment activities, including chess, dance, health, and robotics club, among others. Alain Locke partners with Communities in Schools to provide after-school programming as needed. Alain Locke also engages several parent volunteers in its programming; the Parent Advisory Committee was created to facilitate enrichment opportunities throughout the school day and after school.

2011–2012 School Calendar

Quarter	Start Date	End Date
Quarter 1	July 11	September 16
Quarter 2	October 3	December 16
Quarter 3	January 9	March 16
Quarter 4	April 9	June 8
4 week summer break		



Six Approaches to Utilizing Extended Learning Time Well: At a Glance

Six Approaches	School's Innovative Practice(s)
Extended time on core subjects	120 minutes of reading/day, 60 minutes of writing/day, and 90 minutes/day of math
Extended time for professional development, teacher preparation, and collaboration	80 minutes/day
Time for building leadership skills, community, and culture	Culture building during the first two weeks of school, "Harambee" (weekly community meetings), assemblies mentoring program, and upper grade seminars
Time for physical education/recess	30 minutes of recess/day
Time for enrichment course(s)	Art, technology, music, gym, Spanish, library
Time for engaging community partners	Communities in Schools

8 POINTS CHARTER SCHOOL

Grades: 5–8

630 East State Street, Jacksonville, IL 62650

	8 Points Charter School	Jacksonville School District 117
School Start Time	8:05 a.m.	8:05 a.m.
School End Time	4:30 p.m.	2:35 p.m.
Academic School Days	190	170
Total School Days	210	180

Sample School Day

7:00–8:05 a.m.	School Doors Open
8:05–8:30 a.m.	Advisory with Breakfast
8:32–9:45 a.m.	1st Hour (Core)
9:47–10:17 a.m.	2nd Hour (Enrichment)
10:19–11:32 a.m.	3rd Hour (Core)
11:32 a.m.–12:02 p.m.	Lunch
12:04–1:17 p.m.	4th Hour (Core)
1:19–1:49 p.m.	5th Hour (Enrichment)
1:51–3:05 p.m.	6th Hour (Core)
3:05–3:28 p.m.	Break
3:30–4:30 p.m.	Leadership & Community
4:30–7:30 p.m.	Homework and Community Hours (Tuesday & Thursday)

About 8 Points Charter School

8 Points Charter School offers a high quality public education option for parents and students in Jacksonville School District 117 who desire a personalized approach to education focused on community, communication, and connections. To support the mission, 8 Points plans their school day around their eight core values: Literacy Acquisition, Academic Excellence, Family Involvement, Individual Responsibility, Goals Attainment, Community Awareness, Leadership Development, and Technology Immersion.

8 Points schedules a 190-day school calendar, which is 20 days longer than the traditional district calendar.

More time for differentiated instruction on core subjects

Students take English Language Arts (ELA) infused with social sciences and speech for 150 minutes every day, as well as 73 minute blocks for math and science every day. Teachers have autonomy to incorporate technology as they see fit, such as Powerpoints, smartboards, laptops, and digital cameras, typically for up to 75% of lesson time.

8 Points implements a variety of innovative curricula to enhance academic lessons. For instance, Fast ForWord Reading Program is an intensive program that strengthens fundamental cognitive skills required for reading, and also converts these improved cognitive abilities into efficient and effective reading skills. The program requires 30 minutes per day, five days per week, for up to six months.

More time for teacher preparation and collaboration

Teachers at 8 Points have autonomy to plan and implement sound, research-based instruction, beginning with a four-week head start before the school year to prepare. Additionally, teachers have 60 minutes daily to prepare lessons.

Every Friday, teachers focus on professional development for nearly 3.5 hours. During this time, teachers reflect on the week, refine areas that need improvement, analyze cultural and academic data, and hear from external experts to present on various topics of interest.

8 Points spends ample time collaborating with educators and organizations that have records of success from across the country, including Building Excellence Schools, Uncommon Charter Schools, and Victory Schools. Math teachers at 8 Points are also working with a local doctoral candidate to implement the Connected Math curriculum, a math in-context program.

More time for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture

8 Points spends the first two weeks of the school year building positive school culture and practicing school systems and procedures. Teachers and staff have high expectations for students on how to execute every day routines, such as hallway transitions, lunchroom behavior, use of lockers, and restroom procedures. Time spent on culture and routines at the beginning of the year saves time throughout the school year.

Advisory period is scheduled for 25 minutes at the beginning of every school day. During advisory period, students get ready for the day by eating breakfast, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, checking each other's uniforms, and engaging in a team warm up activity. Some examples of team warm up activities include a stretching exercise, art project, or assembling a puzzle as a team.

Advisory teams regroup for an hour at the end of each day, Monday through Thursday, for a Community & Leadership course. Students focus on building leadership skills, social emotional support networks, and engage in service

learning projects in the local community at organizations such as local senior citizen homes, churches, and homeless shelters.

Every Friday, 8 Points schedules 25 minutes for a Town Hall meeting. Students recite the school chant, talk about highlights of the week, present one student with the Weekly Leader Award, and circulate an inflatable moose that serves as an award for an outstanding advisory team. Teachers also take this time to talk with students about their academic and behavioral data.

More time for physical education and/or recess

8 Points schedules 40 minutes for lunch and recess every day. 8 Points offers a physical education enrichment course, where students engage in athletic games, or adaptive physical education, such as dance or yoga. Students also take 25 minutes for break time toward the end of the school day, where students eat a snack and spend time outside.

During health class, students are split by gender, and engage in Girl Talk and Boy Talk. This course is offered four days per week for 30 minutes, and uses a blended social-emotional and health curriculum. Time is allowed for students to ask health related questions that are immediate and relevant to their lives. Because of significant demand from students for conversations about health and social-emotional issues, 8 Points hosts additional Girl Talk and Boy Talk sessions after school from 4:30–6:30 p.m.

More time for enrichment opportunities

Enrichment courses help 8 Points staff reach all types of learners, and facilitate cross curricular connections. Every child at 8 Points participates in a 30-minute enrichment course every day. 8 Points partners with IMAGINE Foundation to bring in expert musicians, chefs, photographers, and gardeners to work with students, and spark college and career interests.

8 Points also partners with a local college, Illinois College, to teach a technology course through a program called SCRATCH. Every Tuesday and Thursday, the day is extended until 6:30 for students participating in the SCRATCH program. Students learn basic level computer programming, graphic design, and STEM concepts.

2011–2012 School Calendar

Quarter	Start Date	End Date
Quarter 1	August 15	October 6
Quarter 2	October 17	December 21
Quarter 3	January 4	March 30
Quarter 4	April 10	June 15
Students: 8 week summer break; Teachers: 6 week break (Return Aug. 1)		



Six Approaches to Utilizing Extended Learning Time Well: At a Glance

Six Approaches	School's Innovative Practice(s)
Extended time on core subjects	150 minutes of English Language Arts blended with social sciences/day. 73 minute blocks of science and math/day
Extended time for professional development, teacher preparation, and collaboration	60 minutes of preparation time/day Over 2 hours of professional development/week
Time for building leadership skills, community, and culture	Morning Advisory period, Community & Leadership course, Town Hall meetings
Time for physical education/recess	40 minutes for combined lunch and recess/day, 30 minutes of physical education/day
Time for enrichment course(s)	30 minutes of various enrichment courses/day
Time for engaging community partners	Lincoln Land Community College, Illinois College, MacMurray College, IMAGINE Foundation, a variety of experts and community non-profits

EPIC ACADEMY CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

Grades: 9–12

8255 South Houston Avenue, Chicago, IL 60617

	EPIC	*CPS
School Start Time	8:00 a.m.	8:30 a.m.
School End Time	3:45 p.m.	3:25 p.m.
Academic School Days	175	170
Total School Days	189	180

*Times may vary

Sample School Day

7:30–8:35 a.m.	Breakfast
8:45–9:15 a.m.	Crew
9:20–10:45 a.m.	Reading/Math Foundations
10:50–12:40 p.m.	U.S. History/College, Careers & Skills
	Lunch (20 min.)
12:45–2:10 p.m.	Biology/Elective or Support Class
2:15–3:40 p.m.	Algebra/Language Arts
3:50–5:30 p.m.	Sports or Urban Gateways arts programming

2011–2012 School Calendar

Trimester	Start Date	End Date
Trimester 1	September 6	December 23
Trimester 2	January 9	March 23
Trimester 3	April 2	June 22
10 week summer break		

About EPIC Academy Charter High School

EPIC Academy Charter High School is committed to preparing high school students of the South Chicago community for college and career success. EPIC students study history, science, and mathematics through a local lens, including the study of the rise and fall of industrialism at the U.S. Steel South Works in South Chicago, the effects of fossil fuel pollution on plant diversity in the area, and the economic consequences of payday lending on the community.

EPIC ascribes to the Expeditionary Learning Model which represents a holistic approach to growing student achievement, and preparing students for college and productive citizenship. EPIC structures its school year on a trimester schedule.

More time for differentiated instruction on core subjects

To achieve a tailored schedule that meets the needs of each student, EPIC has a different schedule for each grade. To ensure that all freshmen are caught up to grade level, school leaders have scheduled five rigorous academic courses: 80 minutes of math and reading everyday, 80 minutes of science and social studies every other day.

Sophomores, juniors, and seniors take 80 minutes of reading and writing every day, and 80 minutes of math, science and social studies every other day. Each upper classman also takes an enrichment course unique to each grade.

Each trimester, EPIC students work toward a cross curricular long term project, which brings academic concepts to life. For instance, one trimester students addressed the food desert issue in Chicago by applying statistics concepts learned in math class, and research and writing skills learned in reading and social studies classes. The ultimate goal is real life application of academic concepts to address broader community issues.

EPIC builds in 45 minutes per day for either an intervention or enrichment course. Students behind in academic core subjects will get extra time to master fundamental concepts. Students who have achieved mastery in core subject concepts will take an enrichment or leadership course, such as art, music, technology, or foreign language.

More time for teacher preparation and collaboration

EPIC invests ample time in developing and preparing teachers for success in the classroom. Teachers at EPIC engage in four weeks of professional development before school starts in August. Teachers take this time to discuss whole school norms, map out academic units, and create rigorous curriculum for their students.

Throughout the school year, each teacher at EPIC has a 90-minute preparation period every day which coincides with other teachers in their cohort. Wednesdays are shortened days; students leave at 2 p.m. and teacher professional development is scheduled from 2:30–4:30 p.m. Professional development usually focuses on classroom management, assessments, standards-based grade books, and reading instruction for all teachers. EPIC also works with Expeditionary Learning professionals who host workshops on project based learning and building community. More time invested in teachers has led to an 85% retention rate among staff.

More time for building leadership skills, community, and strong school culture

EPIC has three main structures built in to the school day for helping students build leadership skills, community and strong school culture: 1) CREW, 2) Community Meetings, and 3) Mikva Challenge. CREW is considered the “family unit” within EPIC which meets for 30 minutes, four days a week. CREW teams support each other academically and personally, and engage in team building exercises and discussions. CREW teams consist of 18–22 students, and teams stay together for

all four years of high school. In CREW, students put together a portfolio of their work during the trimester and use their portfolio as a platform for discussing grades and progress. 98% percent of students report that they can address an academic issue with a teacher, and even more importantly, 90% could address a personal issue with a teacher.

EPIC also hosts Community Meetings every Friday afternoon. This time is spent in grade levels celebrating achievements and building positive culture. EPIC reports having 97% days of peace throughout the 2011–2012 school year.

EPIC partners with Mikva Challenge to engage students in three areas of civic engagement: Youth Policy Making, Community Problem Solving, and Electoral Participation. Students take two hours per week to build an advocacy plan to address an issue facing the community, such as homelessness, racism, and/or obesity. Mikva Challenge also empowers students to take on leadership projects for the benefit of the school community. For instance, one challenge involved planning nine college trips for students at EPIC.

Central to EPIC’s mission is that every child will be college or career-ready after high school graduation. To achieve this, every student at EPIC takes a College, Career, and Skills course for 80 minutes every other day. Students use this time to build cultural capital, take interest profiles, research colleges and college requirements, review transcripts, and create a 10-year life plan. Juniors and seniors use this time to prepare for the ACT exam, write college essays, and fill out FAFSA forms. An end of year survey of freshmen showed that 94% believed a college degree was important to them, 93% knew the steps needed to reach their career goals, and 90% understood how to apply and get accepted to college.

More time for physical education and/or recess

EPIC schedules a fitness class for sophomores and juniors for 215 minutes per week. Students engage in physical activities and games, as well as learn about healthy lifestyle habits.

More time for enrichment opportunities

As a part of the Expeditionary Learning Model, EPIC schedules one-week Intensive courses, which take place during the last week of regular classes for each semester from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. There are two types of Intensives: Academic Intensives and Enrichment Intensives. Students are placed into Academic Intensives if they earn a “C” grade or below in an academic class the previous trimester. Enrichment Intensives are intended for students in good academic standing, and include trading stocks, creative writing, and cooking various cuisines. Intensives serve two purposes: allows for a break in curriculum and allows time for students to recover academic credits. Each Intensive incorporates field work beyond the classroom, and culminates in a showcase at the end of the Intensive week.

Sophomores take two 90 minute classes of Musical Concepts per week, which includes African drumming and music composition lessons. Sophomores and juniors take two 90 minute classes of Spanish per week.

EPIC partners with Urban Gateways, an organization that runs afterschool arts programs from 4–5:30 p.m. Students choose among programs, such as dance, visual arts, spoken word, and graphic design.



Six Approaches to Utilizing Extended Learning Time Well: At a Glance

Six Approaches	School's Innovative Practice(s)
Extended time on core subjects	Freshmen: 80 minutes of math and reading/day, 80 minutes of science and social studies every other day Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors: 80 minutes of reading and writing/day, and 80 minutes of math, science, and social studies every other day
Extended time for professional development, teacher preparation, and collaboration	90 minutes of preparation time/day, and 2 hours of professional development/day
Time for building leadership skills, community, and culture	CREW family meetings, Community Meetings, civic engagement lessons, College, Careers and Skills course
Time for Physical Education/Recess	Fitness class for 215 minutes/week
Time for enrichment course(s)	Intensives, musical concepts, and Spanish
Time for engaging community partners	Mikva Challenge, Urban Gateways, and various professionals

CONCLUSION

At a time when achievement and opportunity gaps continue to persist for Chicago public school students, education leaders must implement bold policies that have potential to improve student outcomes for kids across the system. Thus far, a longer school day and school year in Illinois has been primarily found in the charter school sector. The charter schools featured in this brief have implemented six approaches for implementing a longer school day and year that have had a positive impact on student academic and enrichment goals. We urge CPS leaders to plan a longer school day and school year that benefits all public school students in Chicago, and school leaders to consider the six approaches demonstrated for successfully implementing a longer school day and year.



The Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) is dedicated to the improvement of education by establishing high-quality charter public schools that transform lives and communities. As the voice of the Illinois charter schools, INCS advocates for legislation on behalf of the charter sector, provides support to strengthen charter schools, and influences education policy for the benefit of all public school students.

Perspectives Charter School

¹ Goddard et. al. "A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation of Teacher Collaboration." April, 2007. <http://centerforedinitiatives.illinoisstate.edu/research/documents/collaboration_studentachievement.pdf>.

² Olga Jarrett, et. al. "The Impact of Recess on Classroom Behavior: Group Effects and Individual Differences", *Journal of Educational Research*, 1998, 92(2), 121–126..

³ Ibid.