



Instructional Time Task Force

Meeting Notes

July 26, 2012

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

B100, Grimes State Office Building

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Barrett, Mark Tucker, Kerry Gumm, Georgia VanGundy, Jennifer Davis, Frank Spillers, Kimberlee Spillers, Katie Byers, Shirley Phillips, Mike Dick, Mary Gannon, Marcella Jusic, Isaiah McGee, John Parker, Jack Ewing, Jill Morrill, Rod Boshart, Kevin Koester, Laura Sands, Joyce Russell, Susan Olesen, Erin Davison-Rippey, George Wheeler, Kay Stork, Leonard Griffith, Mick Jurgensen, Craig Patterson, Sandy Klaus, Shawn Zanders, Mike Dick, Vic Jaras, Jerry Parkin, Richard Lee, Bob Stouffer, Gannon Hendrick, Michelle Rich, Margaret Buckton, Mary A. Hillman, Mary Stegmeier, Jamie Cashman, Brian Johnson, Mike Cormack, Jason Glass, Staci Hupp, Jeff Berger, Phil Wise, Jason Chapman, Anita Micich, Maureen Tiffany, Beth Happe, Cindi McDonald, Jay Pennington, Blair Brown, and Jody Crane.

AGENDA ITEM: Welcome

Expected Outcome	Lead	Follow Up
	Mike Cormack and Jason Glass, Iowa Department of Education	

Notes:

At 10:02 a.m., Mike Cormack opened with thanks to everyone for serving on the task force and introduced Iowa Department of Education Director Jason Glass.

Glass also thanked task force members for their involvement and talked about the origin of the committee. When the Education Blueprint was released in October 2011, instructional time was not addressed in that document. However, an interest in instructional time/extended day/extended year/alternative calendars emerged at almost every meeting that the Governor, Lt. Governor and Glass held presenting the Blueprint.

This task force will be studying issues and bringing back proposals to the Iowa Legislature.

Glass expressed hope for a thoughtful lively discussion of issues related to use of instructional time in schools. He reinforced that students, “the greatest resource in our state,” are first and foremost in the minds of task force members. The task force should also be guided by evidence on best uses of instructional time. He reinforced that the Department is at the disposal of task force members. He looks forward to “the great work of the task force.”

A report by the task force is to be produced by October 15, 2012.

AGENDA ITEM: Member Introductions

Expected Outcome	Lead	Follow Up
	Mike Cormack, Iowa Department of Education	

Notes:

Mike Cormack reviewed logistical information. He reported that there are six overall task forces and the Department is a supporting partner on five other task forces, as well.

Cormack shared information about himself and gave a “starter statement” for introductions. The responses are as follows:

On October 15, this task force will be successful if we. . .

- Are not political and offer actionable recommendations to a Legislature with bi-partisan support.
- Offer good recommendations.
- Reach consensus.
- Consider the needs of all students in Iowa, and the needs of all students are not the same.
- Offer measurable recommendations.
- Have a thorough and honest discussion.
- Keep students first and foremost during discussions and find proposals which will be embraced by a majority of Iowans.
- Boldly focus on the long-term, rather than the short-term low-hanging fruit.
- Are data-driven, looking at trend lines, since those trends are not going in the right direction.
- Develop proposals which contribute to an able workforce.
- Help legislators make the final proposal palatable to constituents with positive messaging.
- See more community involvement.
- Develop a recommendation which preserves local control.
- Consider past successes of other states.
- Involve at least one student on the task force.
- Take a perspective of using time most effectively, rather than simply increasing instructional time.
- Take into consideration what students actually need, not what we think they need.
- Focus on proposals which will increase student achievement.
- Offer proposals which allow students to be creative and entrepreneurial in developing their own “businesses” while in school.
- Redefine innovation. Don’t tweak. Establish an environment where productivity occurs in schools.
- Recognize the complexity of the issues and look at time as a gift.
- Agree on terms of discussions with clarity.

AGENDA ITEM: Task Force Communications

Expected Outcome	Lead	Follow Up
	Staci Hupp, Iowa Department of Education	

Notes:

Staci Hupp, Communications Director, Iowa Department of Education, suggested guidelines for wording recommendations and protocol for interacting as a group.

The report should be clear, concise, informational, understandable, approximately 10-15 pages in length, in plain English, with bulleted recommendations. One or two task force members could be appointed to draft the report.

The report should include a title page, summary, task force membership, meeting schedule, overview, recommendations, pilot project proposal, references, and appendices. Hupp indicated she would share a template that has been developed for all task forces to use.

Hupp has created a Wiki for the task force. The group can work collaboratively on the project on this shared “file drawer.” The idea is to share information more efficiently. She demonstrated use of the Wiki, which includes a “how to” video on use of the Wiki. The “edit” button and “save” button are the buttons of most use. All task force members will receive invitations to the Wiki.

AGENDA ITEM: Local Instructional Time Financial Research

Expected Outcome	Lead	Follow Up
	Jeff Berger and Jay Pennington, Iowa Department of Education	

Notes:

Dr. Jeff Berger and Jay Pennington presented information about past Iowa Department of Education work on instructional time issues. Pennington focused on data while Berger described the context of this issue.

Pennington reviewed the fall staff Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS) collection. The data were broken down by school district size. Pennington showed a PowerPoint that will be posted to the Wiki.

In the past 10 years, there has been an increase of teaching contract days. Over 50 percent of Iowa's teachers work at least 190 days. In general, smaller Iowa school districts have fewer contract days than larger districts.

About \$1.4 billion dollars in regular salary were spent during the 2011-2012 school year.

The numbers of instructional days were presented. Larger districts offer more partial school days. Parent-teacher conferences can also be counted as instructional days

Numbers of instructional minutes, hours, and days were also reviewed. Smaller districts have more contact time. Minutes added to hours and days point to smaller districts scheduling 50 hours of contact time each year. A key discussion will be to determine how instructional time is used. Lunch time, passing time, and transition minutes are included in instructional time.

There is not a lot of data on after school and before school programs in schools. A recommendation of the task force could be to gather more information about such programs.

A task force member asked for a break-down of percentages of school district size, and the percentage of student enrollment by school district size.

Berger gave a "quick download" on the history of these issues. Iowa schooling is largely locally-controlled. Because of the local control legacy, case law and court law causes schools to drive differently than other state entities. The state is an interested party in educational matters. Laws are structured to ensure minimums, which is not always about quality. Education law is written to ensure equity and quality. But the state law should not stifle innovation. So a tension exists between state control and local control. Schools operate under Dillon's Rule: "You can't do it, unless you're told you can." Schools are instructed to schedule a fiscal year from July 1 to June 30, schedule 180 days of school, and start a school year on or around the week of September 1st (unless a waiver for start date is granted). Start date has been controversial. Another controversy? "What is a day?" A day is 5.5 hours of instruction, which can include passing time, but not lunch; recess time is counted, if supervised by a teacher. Within any 5-day stretch, the time must accumulate to 27.5 hours in that stretch. These are minimum checkpoints. None of the school districts are operating at the minimum, because all schools are meeting at far more than 5.5 hours a day, so, converted to minutes, the schools could,

essentially, release far earlier than 180 days. The task force's conversation should pertain to "What's the right thing to do?"

Cormack reviewed language from SF 2284, the legislation which resulted in creation of this task force and requirements of the task force proposal:

"The director of the department of education shall appoint a school instructional time task force comprised of at least seven members to conduct a study regarding the minimum requirements of the school day and the school year. The study shall include but not be limited to an examination of the following:

"Whether the minimum length of an instructional day should be extended, and, if so, whether the instructional day should be extended for all students or for specific groups of students.

"Whether the minimum number of instructional days or hours in a school year should be increased and, if so, whether the minimum number of days or hours in a school year should be increased for all students or for specific groups of students.

"Whether the minimum number of instructional days or hours should be rearranged to result in a shorter summer break, with other days or weeks off throughout the school year.

"Whether the minimum school year should be defined by a number of days or by a number of instructional hours.

"Whether there should be a uniform, statewide start date for the school year that can only be waived for the purpose of implementing an innovative educational program.

"Whether resources necessary to extend the minimum length of an instructional day or the minimum length of a school year are justified when compared to competing education priorities.

[A question was asked about how the task force could reasonably determine weights of educational priorities. Mike Cormack answered that the task force should ultimately decide the importance of the recommendations.]

"Based upon the examination conducted pursuant to subsection 1 the task force shall design, propose, and establish goals for a pilot project on extending the school day or year to expand instructional time for prekindergarten through grade twelve.

"The appointment of members to the task force shall be made in a manner which provides geographical area representation and complies with sections 69.16, 69.16A, and 69.16C.

"The task force shall submit its findings, recommendations, and pilot project proposal in a report to the state board of education, the governor, and the general assembly by October 15, 2012."

The task force is not making law – only a recommendation. All words do not need to be parsed. The task force is not writing code. We are offering ideas to policy-makers.

AGENDA ITEM: National Center on Time and Learning Presentation

Expected Outcome	Lead	Follow Up
	Jennifer Davis and Blair Brown, National Center on Time and Learning	

Notes:

Jennifer Davis and Blair Brown represented The National Center on Time and Learning, a research group from Massachusetts. Davis and Brown came on their own time and at their own expense to present information from the National Center on Time and Learning. Mike Cormack thanked them in his introduction for doing so.

According to Davis, she has found the following to be true in studies on this topic. This is a very important topic on the reform agenda. This topic is bubbling-up all over the country. With the standards movement came a demand on the best use of instructional time. The organization is funded by a national foundation.

- Many people believe the school day hours and work day hours should match.
- International competition – while involving complicated data – indicates that our students are falling behind in the global marketplace. The highest performing countries have longer school years and longer school days; there are various factors at play.
- The summer gap issue is of great concern, particularly among the lowest socioeconomic populations. The gap widens for them.
- The curriculum has narrowed due to new demands.
- Teachers are saying they do not have adequate time to collaborate with their colleagues or meet the needs of their students.
- The public has changed their perspective over the years. Do children need to spend more time in school? The public wants more time – both those who are the richest and the poorest, an interesting trend.
- New data is emerging. Charter schools are pioneers in the arena of effectively using increased instructional time. Increasing instructional time is the key factor in enhanced student achievement.
- Research Study: “Time Well Spent”
- Higher-performing schools add a significant amount of additional time, and they identify learning activities which bring the highest return on that investment of time. Expectations are high. Students are highly engaged. It’s not just time. Time in combination with these other factors results in greater student achievement.
- There is a national momentum for increasing instructional time.
- The 2009 ARRA Education Investments Act [stimulus dollars], a federal initiative, defined increased learning time as a required reform.

- No Child Left Behind waivers were granted to states which showed innovative, research-based use of instructional time.
- Senator Harkin is championing the Time Act, which would provide federal dollars to schools.
- Arizona passed a law in 1997 allotting 5 percent additional funding to districts which increased the school year to 200 days.
- Massachusetts, in 2005, launched an initiative called the Expanded Learning Initiative to expand learning time 300 additional hours beyond the normal. Over half of the participating schools are charter schools. Charter schools have driven the work in public school districts.
- Tennessee created a district of “achieving” schools, enabling autonomy around scheduling, staffing, and budget.
- Thirty “alliance districts” are moving forward with innovations.
- Kentucky, Washington, Maine, and Illinois are among states that all have new school models emerging.
- How can innovation occur at a time of economic downturn?
- Creatively. Through flexible scheduling, flexible staffing, flexible enforcement of policies, and through technology use to expand time and reduce costs – thus increasing flexibility.
- The bottom line? The “teacher day” doesn’t have to be a “student day.” In Delaware, for instance, teachers work 180 days “year round,” staggered in their assignments in order to serve certain populations through the summer (with intercession vacations at times atypical to the traditional school calendar).
- Data are mixed, regarding “year round” schools.
- Successful schools focus on collaboration time, instructional time, creative partnerships, and tutoring.
- There are many issues to consider over the course of the next few months: contract issues, costs, the “summer institution,” and, most importantly, educational impact.
- This is the state-of-affairs now, but this is a rapidly-changing environment.
- Teachers are more supportive of a longer day than a longer year.
- People plan their lives around a calendar which has been around for 200 years.
- Are you looking for a statewide requirement or opt-in pilot? There is still a lot of resistance to major changes to calendars. The more constituents are engaged, the greater the ownership and likelihood for positive long-term change.
- The task force should be thoughtful about the communication.

- It isn't about more time. It's about more time well spent. Time is a resource which should be considered along with other educational factors.
- "Enacting reform is difficult. There is a huge difference between the theory of reform and the reality of it – it is a lot harder than it looks. It requires full transparency, unyielding tenacity, continuous communication, relentless advocacy, and the courage to measure progress and then deal with the results, whatever they may be." (Jeb Bush, former Governor of Florida)
- Schools need support for change management. Schools need help and time to work through the complexities of change.

Davis concluded her presentation by citing key factors at high-performing schools which include:

- (1) focused, school-wide goals
- (2) rigorous academics
- (3) differentiated supports of teachers and students
- (4) frequent data cycles
- (5) targeted teacher development
- (6) engaging enrichment
- (7) enhanced school culture.

A task force member asked how increased instructional time in a day and year is impacting families. Every family is different. Every community is different.

What about the impact on extracurricular activities?

The group talked about sharing examples which are already in place within the experiences of the task force members.

AGENDA ITEM: History of Instructional Time Efforts in Iowa

Expected Outcome	Lead Margaret Buckton	Follow Up
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Notes:

Margaret Buckton gave a presentation entitled, "It's About Time: Instructional Time Macro and Micro Policy Considerations." Margaret is a founding partner of the Iowa School Finance Information Services (ISFIS) and a grandparent of two students at Des Moines Christian School! Her comments included the following.

Buckton discussed instructional time issues from a PowerPoint slide show which will be posted to the Wiki.

In 2011, the Iowa General Assembly pondered legislation which advocated for required instructional hours, rather than days. Over 75 percent of the school districts were already meeting the requirements of the proposed law. Perhaps the recommendation could be EITHER hours OR days.

Buckton addressed start date considerations, citing that they are predominantly regional, with western Iowa schools tending to start earlier than the rest of the state.

Businesses lose tourism dollars when schools start earlier in August. These dollars help (or do not help) to pay for schools. Research available on this topic is found at www.saveiowasummers.org.

What is best for students? For families? For the state's economy? These are all considerations in debating instructional time issues.

Many of the legislature's recent education reforms had to do with time, Thirty-six hours of collaboration time among teachers, 90 minutes of reading instruction, third grade retention and summer school were among items that were included in SF 2284.

Buckton shared a quote from Arne Duncan: “. . .our school day is too short, our week is too short, our year is too short.”

Buckton asked, “Is that true?”

Not necessarily. The gap is not that big on the average. Yet higher-performing countries may be using time better (or this is an apples-to-oranges comparison of homogenous populations versus more heterogeneous populations). Net per teacher teaching time is higher in the U.S. than any other country in the world! We are not using time as effectively as we can.

What does the research say?

“. . .poor children have limited access to quality learning outside of school.”

Poor students have a much lower graduation rate.

“. . .extending time in school would in fact likely raise student achievement.”

Teacher effectiveness is a key issue.

Findings suggest that extending school time can be an effective way to support student learning, particularly (a) for students most at risk of school failure and (b) when considerations are made for how time is used.

What does the research say about effective collaboration?

“Teacher learning teams in studies demonstrating significant impacts on student achievement all focus on student learning.”

What is the summer school research?

“Disadvantaged students are most susceptible to summer learning loss compared to their more advantaged counterparts because of differences in opportunities to practice and learn outside of school.”

Pittsburgh has an innovative summer program engineered by Dr. Linda Lane, former Associate Superintendent of the Des Moines Public Schools.

Buckton reviewed economic considerations with time.

Funding must be stable. School districts cannot have uncertainty as to whether the funding will be available.

As Buckton concluded, this is “less about time and more about quality teaching and learning.”

AGENDA ITEM: Action Items/Review

Expected Outcome	Lead Mike Cormack	Follow Up
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Notes:

The next meetings will be held on August 23, 2012, and September 18, 2012. Both meetings will be held in the Grimes State Office Building, B100 (basement level), 400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines.

The task force thought the 10:00 a.m. start time and 5-hour timeframe is workable.

A task force member suggested the task force or subcommittee seek the input of people at the State Fair.

Another task force member suggested Iowa Public Television as an effective partner.

An additional task force member indicated that there are two separate issues which could be settled separately: (1) start date and (2) increasing instructional time.

Input:

Task force members should submit questions and issues for building future agendas.

Key Questions:

Who are the stakeholders?

What are our priorities?

What do we want to influence?

Quick Take-Aways:

It's about the students. It's about what's good for students.

It's quality of time, not the quantity of time.

There are creative solutions, but you need to involve constituents, so you're driving change “with,” rather than “to” people.

Increase the amount of time for teachers to talk in-depth about students and student learning.

Mike Cormack thanked all of the participants and presenters.

The meeting concluded at 3:03 p.m.