

Expanded Learning Time Schools

Summary of Abt Evaluation Study Design

Updated Summer 2008

In December 2006, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) contracted with Abt Associates, Inc., a Cambridge-based evaluation firm, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative in Massachusetts. Massachusetts 2020 has partnered with the ESE to support the evaluation by raising private funds and serves on the management team of the evaluation.

The evaluation has two major purposes, corresponding to the study's two main components: implementation and outcomes.

In the *implementation* component, Abt will gain a detailed understanding of why districts and schools chose to adopt the ELT initiative and how they planned for and then implemented ELT. As part of this research, Abt will employ the following methods of data collection:

- (a) **Document review** of ELT schools' plans, schedules, budgets and other relevant resources;
- (b) **Interviews** with key stakeholders (e.g., principals, superintendents, and other district personnel);
- (c) **Focus groups** with teachers, parents and others;
- (d) **Surveys** of teachers and students to test for change in attitudes among teachers and students at the start of implementation versus the end of the school year; and
- (e) **Extant data** collected by schools, districts and the ESE to examine changes in attendance, demographics, etc.

Abt will continue to revisit questions of implementation over the course of the evaluation to learn how and why schools and districts may change the ways in which they carry out the initiative.

In the *outcomes* component, Abt will examine the impact of the ELT initiative on students, teachers, parents, schools, districts and other stakeholders (e.g., school partners). Evaluators hope to generate a range of indicators to measure effects. They will employ the same methods noted above to track outcomes on various groups.

Additionally, because the ultimate aim of the ELT initiative is to produce improvements in student achievement, evaluators will perform a deep analysis of the most important indicator available: scores on state assessment tests (MCAS) in English/language arts, mathematics and science. Evaluators will examine changes in scores across time and will use two comparison methods. They will:

- (a) Compare five years of scores in each ELT school before the implementation of ELT to two and three years after implementation using an “**interrupted time series analysis**” to provide information on the degree to which ELT may have had an effect on student achievement by comparing predicted scores, based on a school’s past performance, to actual scores; and
- (b) Compare changes at ELT schools with changes experienced at a **matched cohort** of comparison schools (one comparison school for each ELT school) over the same time periods.

Together, these methods will enable evaluators to determine, to a moderate degree of power, the effects of ELT on student performance.

Finally, because Abt will be conducting an evaluation of both implementation and outcomes, it will have the opportunity to assess outcomes through a series of variables generated from the implementation component. This multivariate analysis will enable evaluators to draw correlations between particular effects and particular implementation factors, thus giving a better understanding of what elements of school structure, personnel and behaviors are associated with identified effects.

A matrix of questions, data sources and comparison cohorts follows on pp. 4 -6. This matrix details the first two years of the evaluation, corresponding to the first two years of ELT implementation, 2006 – 2008.

In June 2008, the U.S. DOE awarded a grant of \$750,000 each year for four years, a total of \$3 million. Not only will this fund the evaluation through 2011, assuring that the ELT evaluation will be assessed for at least six years, the substantial increase in funding will enable the following additional activities to take place:

1. **Addition of a third cohort of schools** (those beginning participation in 2008) – The evaluation will be tracking progress at a total of 26 schools, thus giving evaluators a very large cohort of students (13,500) and significant number of implementation models through which to judge the impact of the ELT intervention. Including additional schools and years in the study will also help increase the power of the evaluation and enable us to detect smaller effect sizes than we could have with the original study design.
2. **Analysis of the planning process** – Abt will follow four planning districts to better understand how planning relates to implementation and, in turn, to the effectiveness of the implementation to generate improved student outcomes. (The current design does not consider planning except through interviews with principals.)
3. **In-depth examination of time spent** – Constituting the most expensive aspect of the enhanced research design, Abt will now collect much better information on how the extra time is actually being used, most importantly through classroom observations of both ELT and comparison schools. (Currently this information is collected only through surveys and interviews.)
4. **Exploration of the Massachusetts 2020/ESE partnership** – The uniqueness of the Mass 2020/DESE partnership has enabled the ELT schools to have access to technical assistance throughout the planning and implementation process, assistance that they

would not have through DESE capacity alone. Abt will explore how this partnership leverages change at the ELT schools.

5. **Longitudinal analyses** – Because the evaluation will now extend six years, Abt will have the opportunity to examine the longer-range effects of attendance at an ELT school on student outcomes.

For additional questions on the evaluation, contact Carrie Conaway (781-338-3106) at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or David Farbman at Massachusetts 2020 (617-378-3922).

Note: Gray shaded boxes are completed.

PHASE I: IMPLEMENTATION

Questions/Variables of Analysis	Method	Data Source(s)	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the characteristics of the schools that are implementing ELT and what was the process to plan for expanding the learning time? ○ What does ELT look like in practice? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. schedule, curriculum b. instructional practices c. budgeting d. labor agreements e. staffing f. partnerships g. parental choice h. redesign process ○ What is the correlation between leadership’s “theory of change” and implementation? ○ What have been barriers to implementation? ○ What has helped facilitate implementation? 	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DOE staff ○ Mass 2020 staff ○ Principals (Cohort 1: 10; Cohort 2: TBD) ○ Supts. (Cohort 1: 5; Cohort 2: TBD) ○ Other district personnel ○ Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cohort 1: Spring 2007 + 2008 ○ Cohort 2: Fall 2007 – Spring 2008
	Demographic, other data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DOE SIMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spring 2007 + 2008
	Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents ○ Teachers ○ Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cohort 1: Spring 2007 + 2008 ○ Cohort 2: Fall 2007 – Spring 2008
	Document Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grant applications ○ Design plans ○ School improvement plans ○ Dist. + school financial, org. data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cohort 1: Winter - Spring 2007; 2008 ○ Cohort 2: Fall 2007 – Spring 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are attitudes towards and expectations of ELT? 	Surveys (Cohort 1 schools only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mass 2020 student survey ○ Mass 2020 teacher survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sept. 2006 + June 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How is time spent in classrooms? 	Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ELT teacher + matched cohort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cohorts 1 + 2: Fall 2007 – June 2008

ELT EVALUATION (PHASE II): OUTCOMES

Category	Questions/Variables of Analysis	Method	Unit of Analysis	Data Source(s)	Timeframe
Students	What is the degree of effect on academic achievement?	Interrupted time series analysis	School, Grade (Cohort 1 only)	o MCAS (ELA, math, science)	2001 – 06; 2007 – 2008
		Matched cohort comparison (incl. interrupted time series for MCAS)	School, Grade (Cohort 1 only)	o MCAS	2001 – 06; 2007 – 2008
				o Formative assessments (var. by district)	SY 07 – 08 and ongoing
		Var. comparisons (district, other schools, state)	School, Grade (Cohort 1 only)	o MCAS	2007 - 2008
		Test item analysis	Student (Cohort 1 only)	o MCAS	2007 - 2008
	What is the degree of effect on engagement, satisfaction, attitudes towards teachers/school/learning in Year 1 of implementation?	Surveys	School (Cohort 1 ELT schools only)	o Mass 2020 student survey	Sept. 2006 + June 2007
	What is the degree of effect on engagement, satisfaction, attitudes towards teachers/school/learning?	Matched cohort comparison	School; Grades 5 + 8	o Surveys (Abt) o Focus groups with teachers, parents; interviews with principals (ELT schools only)	Fall 2007 – Spring 2008
	What is the degree of effect on participation in classes and in activities (during + after school)?				
	What is the degree of effect on attendance, discipline, mobility?	Matched cohort comparison	School	o SIMS (State data) o Focus groups with teachers, parents; interviews with	2006 - 2008

				principals (ELT schools only)	
	What is degree of effect on various student characteristics and activities?	Matched cohort comparison	School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCAS 8th gr. questionnaire 	2007 – 2008
		Var. comparisons (district, other schools, state)			
Teachers	What is degree of effect on prof. development, collaboration, instructional practices in Year 1 of implementation?	Surveys	School (Cohort 1 ELT schools only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mass 2020 teacher survey 	Sept. 2006 + June 2007
	What is the degree of effect on attendance, turnover?	Matched cohort comparison	School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State data School data 	2001 – 2008
	What is the degree of effect on engagement, satisfaction, attitudes towards teaching?	Matched cohort comparison	School; Grades; Staff type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys (Abt) Teacher focus groups (ELT schools only) Principal interviews 	Fall 2006 – Spring 2008
	What is the effect on how teachers spend time during the school day and involvement in enrichment?				
	What is degree of effect on prof. development, collaboration, instructional practices?				
Parents	What is the perception of how ELT has impacted students' satisfaction, engagement, learning, attitudes, safety?	Focus Groups (ELT schools only)	School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents 	Spring 2007 + ongoing
		Opinion survey	School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mass 2020 telephone survey 	Spring 2007
ELT Schools	What is the range of effects among and between ELT schools?	Two-level hierarchical linear model; multivariate analysis	School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variables determined through implementation analyses 	2008