

# Defining the Next Generation of Expanded Learning Time: Teacher Leader Perspectives on School Time

By Kim Farris-Berg, Lori Nazareno, and Barnett Berry  
Center for Teaching Quality

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### Introduction

As “Expanded Learning Time” (ELT) initiatives gain increased momentum across the country, the National Education Association’s (NEA) state and local affiliates have the opportunity to get out in front, defining and negotiating a role for their members to lead the initiatives’ design, implementation and evaluation. Teachers can proactively use their knowledge and expertise to answer crucial questions for their schools, districts, and associations, including:

- How could ELT best be used to improve teaching and learning in districts and schools?
- What policies, incentives, and planning supports will best help teachers in initiating, designing, and managing ELT initiatives?
- How will teachers, districts, and associations know if the initiatives are successful?


### Districts and states are spurring rapid growth

In spring 2015, the National Center on Time & Learning’s (NCTL) biannual update of its database revealed that there are now more than 2,000 public schools with ELT initiatives. They exist in almost every state in the country, with well over 100 schools in some states. Over the last three years, the number of students served by schools with ELT initiatives has nearly doubled—from 520,000 to more than one million.<sup>1</sup> To be counted as an ELT school, NCTL requires that the school have at least 30 minutes more time per day and/or 10 more days per year than a comparison public school.<sup>2</sup> Among schools that NCTL identifies as having ELT, the average length of the school day is 7.6 hours.<sup>3</sup>

A spring 2015 joint report from the NCTL and Education Commission of the States (ECS) also reported that ELT is no longer growing by one school at a time. At least 35 districts in more than 10 states are spurring growth in the number of schools implementing ELT initiatives. What’s more, in the two most recent legislative sessions, states have enacted more than 40 new laws to establish rules around learning time or, more frequently, to carve out ways for schools and/or districts to expand school time.<sup>4</sup> In 2014, for example, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo created a \$24 million grant program to foster ELT initiatives in nine districts across the state. Districts securing the funds would extend the day or year by at least 25 percent, or 300 more hours per year, in hopes of helping to improve academic achievement.<sup>5</sup>

This growing state and district interest is partially motivated by the prioritization of ELT in the federal Race to the Top and School Improvement Grant programs. Some states applied for and secured this funding to foster interest and implementation in districts. Most followed Massachusetts’s lead, since the state had developed its own grant program before federal involvement in 2005. The Massachusetts State Legislature authorized grants of \$1,300 per student to be given to schools applying through the state department of education to expand the school day. Schools receiving the grant also secure technical support from Massachusetts 2020, a statewide initiative designed specifically to support schools in implementation of efforts to expand and modernize the school calendar.<sup>6</sup>

Now Massachusetts’s investment in ELT for individual schools is beginning to influence entire districts in the state, with Boston Public Schools among the first of such examples. In January 2015, the Boston School Department, Boston School Committee, and



Boston Teachers Union agreed to add 40 minutes to the school day district wide. About one-third of schools already had ELT initiatives, including school-level decision-making authority over how to use additional time in the best ways for the individual school community.<sup>7</sup>

### Successful initiatives don't merely add time, but use time in new and better ways

All this activity has increased the demand for information about the outcomes of ELT initiatives that have been carried out to date, yet the evidence base is limited. While some reports examining ELT initiatives show improved test scores, performance on classroom assessments, and graduation rates, researchers have acknowledged—or referenced their interviewees' acknowledgment—that any changes in student performance should not be attributed to ELT initiatives alone.<sup>8</sup> Many reform initiatives happen at once in schools, including different kinds of ELT initiatives, yet no ELT research has isolated which reform or approach results in which outcome.

However, one conclusion is clear: **ELT initiatives can and do contribute to improved educational outcomes, including student achievement and attainment, when they are well implemented and of high quality.**<sup>9</sup> What does a high-quality, well-implemented initiative look like in practice? We know it *doesn't* look like adding longer blocks of instructional time to a school day only to do more of the same teaching and learning activities. In its 2015 case studies of schools implementing ELT initiatives across four states, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) found that simply expanding time led to fatigue for both teachers and students.<sup>10</sup>

According to NCTL and CEP, successful initiatives sought to use all time in new and better ways—such as individualizing student learning, using data on student learning extensively, and building school cultures of high expectations and mutual accountability. In these environments, teachers were able to cover more content, offer deeper learning (e.g., enrichment courses ranging from robotics and astronomy to drama and creative writing) and build more engaged partnerships with community-based organizations, local businesses, colleges, and institutions.<sup>11</sup> A 2012 *Child Trends* report reviewing an extensive

evidence base on ELT recommended that initiative funders should look for two things as predictors for success: (1) whether there is a clear plan for how the additional time will be used, along with ongoing monitoring to ensure that teachers are supported in implementing new teaching strategies and that students are engaged; (2) whether there is buy-in among teachers, parents, and students.<sup>12</sup>

These findings suggest that if ELT's growth is going to drive transformative changes in teaching and learning, then reforms must go further than simply providing additional time for students to be in school (the first-generation model). Fulfilling the promise of ELT will first require state and local affiliates to work with their members to define what a second-generation model looks like as well as what policies, incentives, and planning supports can help promote and sustain improvement efforts by teachers and administrators over time.

### Teachers can define ELT 2.0. Indeed, they already are.

As educators' experiences and researchers' findings from first-generation initiatives emerged, proponents of "Expanded Learning Time" dropped that original term in favor of "More and Better Learning Time" (MBLT). These advocates want to emphasize that second-generation initiatives should build on what's been learned by encouraging high-quality, well-implemented opportunities for teachers and the broader education community to boldly reimagine the possibilities for student learning and their own profession. This name change is the first major signal that ELT 2.0, now called MBLT, will involve more than just extra time.

Teachers have a lot at stake as state and district-wide approaches, like those in Massachusetts, become more nationally visible, and as more state, district, and school leaders embrace the idea of MBLT. Depending on how it's rolled out, MBLT could easily add to the "initiative burnout" teachers feel as a result of being required to implement multiple reforms pushed from "the top" without much say about whether and how the initiatives can succeed. Depending on the design, issues like burnout, turnover, and working longer-than-negotiated hours could potentially be alleviated or exacerbated by MBLT.

State and local affiliates can begin to lead toward promising outcomes by advocating for states and school district leaders to embrace MBLT (as opposed to just ELT) and for teachers to have a strong role in the design of state and local MBLT initiatives. From there, affiliates must work with teachers to create policy, incentives, and planning supports.

Here are purpose-defining questions affiliate leaders can bring to the conversation:

- Are we pursuing ELT, or MBLT? For example, will our state or district initiative design bring an opportunity for teachers to lead instructional innovation, or will it be a means for requiring teachers to do even more scripted remediation in math and reading?
- How can we put teachers in position to lead the design and implementation of MBLT in their own school communities?
- Will MBLT design allow for more planning and collaboration time, or less?
- Will teachers be able to create new and different approaches to work hours, such as staggered schedules?
- Will teachers be paid for additional work time, or will they be expected to do more work for no additional pay?
- What are the expected outcomes, and will they reflect the reality that most outcomes cannot be attributed directly to MBLT?

An invaluable source of information about how second-generation initiatives might ultimately be designed, implemented, and supported is teacher leaders who have already led MBLT in their schools, such as those who worked with the Teacher Leadership Initiative (TLI), a partnership between NEA, the Center for Teaching Quality, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In the TLI's first year (2013-2014), the partner organizations prepared, supported, and positioned 140 teachers in six states—Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Mississippi—to incubate and execute

their own ideas for school transformation. We are not sure of the total number of school transformation projects that focused on an MBLT initiative, but identified and reviewed 21 for this report.


The TLI experience provided teachers the opportunity to learn with and from one another to develop their leadership skills and abilities. Cohorts of teachers from the six states engaged in an Innovative Leadership learning strand that involved participating in webinars, asynchronous conversations, small group discussions, and a series of online assignments. Participants then chose to focus their learning more deeply on one area of reform: Common Core implementation, teacher evaluation, or school redesign.

Participants' culminating experience centered on the design and implementation of a capstone project of their choice that extended their learning and work beyond their own classrooms and involved activating their colleagues to improve instructional, policy, or association leadership approaches. Those TLI teachers who led the 21 projects with an MBLT component focused on a variety of issues, including: effective use of homeroom time, enriching student learning with computer science, creating a system and culture for peer observation, increasing instructional time without lengthening the school day, intentionally engaging parents in learning how to support their children's learning at home, and more.

In their final project reflections, TLI participants conveyed their successes and areas for improvement, as well as where they received support or encountered barriers. Analyzing the 21 reports, the Center for Teaching Quality Teacher Leader in Residence, Lori Nazareno, identified common themes using a cut-and-sort qualitative research method.

The themes offer important lessons about defining the purpose and goals of next-generation MBLT initiatives. They also provide insight about the opportunities to put policies, incentives, and planning supports in place to help ensure teachers' success—mostly ideas that have worked well to secure teachers a strong role in defining, designing, and maintaining other kinds of reform initiatives with specific applications for MBLT. This report summarizes these lessons and opportunities for state and local affiliate





leaders who are anticipating the arrival or expansion of MBLT in their states and districts. As they secure a role for themselves and their members in the “define and design” process, they can build from the lessons learned to enhance successes and avoid potential struggles.

**Lesson 1: Teachers are willing to lead MBLT initiatives. In fact, many seek to influence how time is used during the existing school day. When principals do not support distributed leadership well, however, teachers struggle to find other means of advancing their ideas.**

High-performing cultures are partially characterized by an open flow of ideas among the workers in an organization—in this case, teachers and their school leaders. But the majority of the 22 TLI participants’ approaches to introducing MBLT initiatives suggest that their school environments do not support distributed leadership and healthy dialogue.

For nearly every TLI capstone project related to MBLT, participants reported that the determining factor influencing the implementation of an initiative was approval from a principal. If the principal did not approve, the initiative would be dead in the water. In these hierarchical cultures of power, whoever is at the top of the decision-making process “calls the shots,” often creating a permission-seeking, change-avoidance culture rather than an innovative and collaborative culture of learning.

In her essay “The Silenced Dialogue,” Lisa D. Delpit, education activist, scholar, and author, explained this type of interaction in terms of power dynamics with respect to interactions between teachers and students.<sup>13</sup> But these same dynamics play out in interactions between principals and teachers. Even in schools where principals have made rules or created structures that require the involvement of teachers in decision-making processes, the principal has still made the rules.

Many TLI participants reported that it was a principal or district leader who initially reached out to them to become a teacher leader, asking for their help on a district curriculum committee or to spearhead a school-wide change, such as better incorporation of technology. Again, the principal makes these selec-

tions and therefore harbors the most power—with teachers only becoming leaders through the principal’s choices. This has been described as the “anoint and appoint” approach to teacher leadership.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, many teachers do not know the rules for navigating this culture of power and, therefore, find it incredibly difficult to propose ideas and lead transformation.

TLI participants affirmed this notion. One group of TLI participants chose not to risk outright principal disapproval, for example, instead proposing initiatives that would offer opportunities for teachers and students outside of the existing school day and not disrupt the status quo. Outside-of-school efforts, they hoped, would be a way to build support and interest in an idea before proposing it to the principal and other influencers (e.g., department chairs) as a school-wide initiative.

Delpit suggests this is how the culture of power perpetuates and strengthens itself. Teachers, who are powerless within existing structures, often choose to circumvent structures rather than more immediately engaging in the power dynamics that currently dominate school cultures. For example, one teacher leader introduced a Summer Reading Incentive Program to prevent summer slide and another created what she named the Student Choice Outside Reading Program. A third teacher leader proposed an after-school, teacher-powered professional development series. Still more teacher leaders sought to create workshops and supply kits for students’ families, helping them to better support learning at home.

A second group of TLI participants, however, possessed at least some skills, abilities, and opportunities to navigate the power dynamics in their schools and, perhaps consequently, felt confident that they would secure the support of their principal (and others in relevant power positions) in implementing their proposed MBLT initiatives.

In these cases, teachers often mentioned their ability to leverage their relationships or connections with those in power, especially since they had built up some trust from previous teacher leadership efforts. Also, their capstone papers showed that they were able to *effectively communicate* about what they were working to accomplish, as well as their plan for

how to get there. They had the efficacy and agency necessary to “work the system” and meet their goals. One teacher said, “Surprisingly, no one seems to care that I now jump the chain of command. My principal now only asks that I keep her in the loop.”

Another teacher leader in this group celebrated a victory, for example, when he helped negotiate the ability for educators to choose how to use 10 of their 35 contractually required professional development hours in his school district. He was proud that he had gained principals’ support for the initiative by working to understand their fears. The principals were concerned about losing time with educators, and they wanted to ensure that teachers’ choices would support the goals of their schools. In the end, teachers and principals agreed to a framework that allowed principals to limit the choices so that each educator would have at least four options from which to choose while leaving principals some influence.

Two additional teachers, both of whom had a significant amount of teaching experience, were also able to garner the support of their principals to implement an identified change for students and teachers. One teacher worked with her colleagues and had the support of the principal to change the school schedule to create more student learning time. The other was able to design and implement a peer mentoring project that created more and better learning time for teachers.

**Policy Opportunity: Develop MBLT policies that encourage new hybrid roles for classroom experts so they can teach and lead.**

As teacher leaders develop the agency and skills to lead MBLT initiatives through their TLI training and their cumulative leadership experience, they begin to crave time to work with both administrators and their teaching colleagues to move the initiatives forward. They don’t want to have to give up working with students as a classroom teacher, however, their source of motivation and knowledge about what would improve teaching and learning. Association leaders should encourage traditional school leaders to open up the opportunity for teachers to pursue hybrid roles. In a hybrid role, a teacher leader can lead school- or district-wide MBLT initiatives part-time

while remaining in the classroom part-time. This opportunity can be named as an option in MBLT policies and laws, and policy language can specifically state that personnel dollars can be reallocated in creative ways in support of such hybrid-role positions.

The 2012 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher found that over one-half (51 percent) of our nation’s teachers are at least somewhat interested in teaching in the classroom part-time combined with other roles or responsibilities in their school or district. And 23 percent reported that they were extremely or very interested in teaching and leading in a hybrid role.<sup>15</sup>

Imagine if each school with an MBLT initiative had one or two teachers working part-time in their classrooms and part-time as MBLT Coordinators responsible for making connections with community partners who can help provide enrichment activities. Perhaps these coordinators could also facilitate connections between teachers, students, and these partners to ensure that enrichment activities reinforce the learning goals of the school and district. Or, perhaps the coordinators could be responsible for leading the team of teachers at their school to determine how best to use MBLT and then work together to develop and execute implementation plans.

**Policy Opportunity: Advocate for legislation or work directly with school boards to put teachers in the position to secure more decision-making flexibility within their schools.**

State and local associations can build coalitions to advance legislation that puts teachers in the position to secure more decision-making flexibility for their schools. The Center on Education Policy found that when schools had waivers from district and state-level policies around areas such as staffing, scheduling, and budgeting, they reported fewer MBLT implementation challenges. In Colorado, for example, the Innovation Schools Act of 2008 requires a 60 percent majority of teachers to approve innovation plans, which have typically included longer working hours or at-will employment contracts, which some teachers want in exchange for flexibility in determining hours and contract language themselves. This flexibility has made it easier for Innovation Schools to work in partnership with teachers to adjust teachers’ schedules as part of a MBLT initiative.<sup>16</sup>

MBLT implementation would also likely be easier in teacher-powered schools, in which teachers can circumvent traditional cultures of power because they have autonomy to collaboratively “call the shots” in up to 15 areas of school-level decision making (for more information, read about the Teacher-Powered Schools Initiative at [www.teacherpowered.org](http://www.teacherpowered.org)). The public, as revealed in a recent national poll commissioned by Education Evolving, trusts teachers to have more authority in shaping curriculum (including decisions about how to use time) and in making staffing and scheduling decisions.<sup>17</sup>

To encourage the development of such schools, some state associations are building coalitions to advocate for legislation that makes clear teams of teachers are among those who can submit proposals to design and run district schools. Due to the advocacy efforts of the Maine Education Association, the Maine legislature passed state law establishing a grant program for teachers to start teacher-powered schools in 2013, and teachers in Portland and Athens are taking advantage.<sup>18</sup>

That said, teachers and associations don’t need to wait for a state law to advance a teacher-powered school. Some groups of teachers and their local associations have worked directly with their district school boards to secure approval for teams of teachers to design and run schools. Local associations pitch in by waiving aspects of the collective bargaining agreement, to put decisions around work hours and hiring in teachers’ hands. This is the approach the Denver Classroom Teachers Association used when they supported the team of teachers who launched the Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy in 2009.<sup>19</sup>

**Policy Opportunity: Develop “venture capital” investments that encourage teacher-powered MBLT initiatives.**

The Minnesota State Legislature is taking steps toward making a financial investment in teachers with high-potential ideas for improving teaching quality and student achievement. In the 2015 legislative session, Minnesota State Senator Greg Clausen and Representative Roz Peterson authored a bill to provide district public school teachers start-up funds to create teacher-powered schools. The bill received

bipartisan support as well as support from numerous leaders from local associations and corporations. Even a district superintendent testified in favor of the bill.<sup>20</sup> The bill was rolled into an omnibus bill and was eventually dropped this year, but it has extensive support and will be taken up again in the next session. The idea offers one way of thinking about how state and local affiliates can develop the opportunity for teachers to secure paid time to design and lead innovative, teacher-powered MBLT initiatives in their schools and districts (initiatives are teacher-powered when teachers secure authority to collaboratively design and run them).

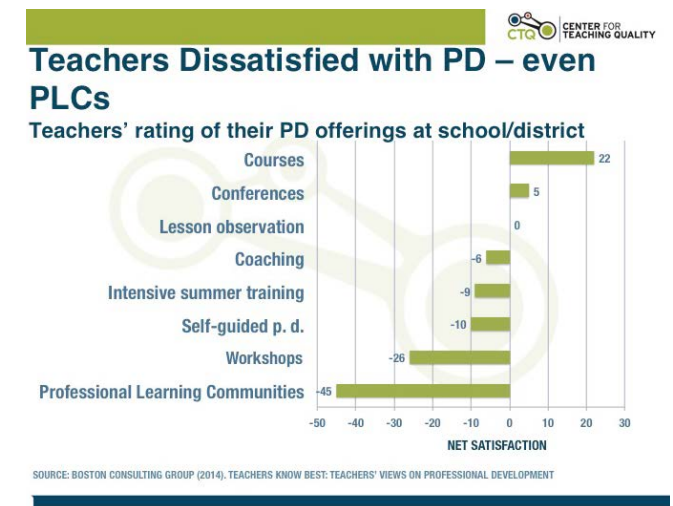
In the meantime, NEA provides grants to state and local affiliates who create promising plans for using the funding to invest in local associations to produce teacher-powered schools with MBLT initiatives. Past recipients include Portland Education Association to cultivate Reiche Community School in Maine and the Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy in Denver. Affiliates can explore these opportunities on the NEA website:

- Grants for Educators: <https://www.neafoundation.org/pages/grants-to-educators/>
- Center for Great Public Schools State and Local Partnerships and the Great Public Schools Fund: <http://www.nea.org/grants/58935.htm>

**Lesson 2: Well-facilitated virtual learning communities (VLCs) are a means for teacher leaders to learn how to better navigate existing power dynamics and build a coalition of colleagues to advance MBLT initiatives.**

We learned that the opportunity to learn from and with colleagues across the country through virtual learning communities (VLCs) created by TLI helped participants to develop content knowledge, leadership skills and dispositions, and confidence in their own leadership capacity. In a well-facilitated VLC, teachers drive their own learning by connecting with other people, with the specific intent that some type of learning will occur because of that connection. This is very different from professional learning communities (PLCs) that many teachers experience in their schools, where the principal frequently determines content and groupings. As a national

study released by Boston Consulting Group in 2014 revealed, our nation spends over \$18 billion annually on teachers’ professional development, including investments in PLCs. However, teachers are very dissatisfied with their professional development, and most notably PLCs, because of the top-down way in which they are executed in their schools.<sup>21</sup>



TLI participants found that building their VLCs—using thoughtfully designed virtual community experiences in the CTQ Collaboratory and other online tools such as Zoom and Google Hangouts—profoundly impacted their ability to move their MBLT initiatives forward. The purpose of this component of TLI was to provide opportunities for participants to identify their own content learning needs and connect with other TLI participants who have similar needs, as well as those who can help them learn what interests them—irrespective of time and geography.

When participants discussed their teaching context and their projects, they had a chance to engage in reciprocal mentoring around content relevant to them. In other words, as they shared their challenges and associated strategies for addressing those challenges, they not only received feedback but they also provided it for their colleagues. Often during this process, teachers received validation that their challenges were a normal part of MBLT implementation and could be overcome. The TLI participants explained that this validation motivated them and kept them focused on accomplishing their purpose rather than lamenting their challenges.


By engaging in virtual community, TLI participants were also able to observe, develop, and practice the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to lead their initiatives forward within existing power dynamics. A good number of participants expressed that their virtual PLC opened their eyes to a new way of thinking about their own identity as teachers and leaders. While some participants were already established teacher leaders, many did not identify with that term. Through their network, they’ve come to embrace their role as “expert teacher” and “teacher leader” with a newfound confidence and interest, giving them more efficacy and agency to push MBLT initiatives forward in their schools. Several teacher leaders said that their virtual PLCs were a means to gain trust in themselves and learn how to earn others’ trust. One reported that learning this skill alone helped him move his MBLT initiative “out of stuck.”

“TLI has given me the opportunity to meet teachers from across the country. I have spent my entire teaching career in one building, so... it is a great thing to talk to other teachers and gain different perspectives. I have used this opportunity as a stepping stone to get involved with [numerous NEA and state association projects].”

“I learned how to maneuver through the district in order to get something accomplished. I had no idea that there were so many people to meet and steps to take in order to get new classes in place. From TLI meetings, though, I have gained a network of people in higher up positions to whom I can go to for questions and concerns. I no longer have to go through the ‘chain of command’ and ask my principal and assistant principal to find out information.”

“I’ve been someone who stood on the sidelines of policy... [but] through my [professional network developed through TLI] I developed wonderful professional relationships with fellow educators in my state who, maybe without realizing it, mentored me to become more involved... As we became closer in our face-to-face meetings and our Google Hangouts, sharing posts and reflections, I became encouraged to be more active with my state association. This is something I never considered a year ago. I attended my first state delegate meeting, an exciting, exhilarating,





and intimidating experience. Being a part of the [state association] and presenting at the summer conference, spreading the word to our fellow members, and sharing what I've learned in my district...will help [my initiative] immensely."

**Policy and Planning Opportunity: Make clear that schools can use MBLT to give teachers the opportunity to spread their expertise through PLCs—both more traditional as well as virtual—that are relevant, job-embedded, and led by teachers.**

The Center on Education Policy found that state, district, and school leaders already implementing MBLT initiatives have learned that job-embedded professional learning, which is highly relevant to the needs of teachers, is one of the most effective uses of time. Its 2015 report stated, "Setting aside more [existing or expanded] time for teachers to collaborate on instructional planning and improve their knowledge and skills through professional development was often seen as a way to improve instructional quality. Indeed, some district and school leaders believed expanding time for these types of teacher activities was more effective than increasing instructional time for students."<sup>22</sup>

As opportunities to use teacher learning time differently begin to expand through MBLT, associations can negotiate for any agreements around MBLT to explicitly state that teachers and administrators can elect to use the time to spread their expertise through job-embedded, teacher-powered PLCs. Associations can also plan for technical support to schools choosing to use MBLT to open the door to job-embedded, teacher-powered professional development. Associations can contract with technical support organizations, such as Massachusetts 2020, or experienced virtual community organizers, such as the Center for Teaching Quality, to secure support for teachers and administrators who are taking on this task.

Imagine if, for example, association members who are leading MBLT initiatives had a virtual space to create their own "story bank" documenting how they are leading initiatives forward, including how they are navigating power dynamics and building coalitions. This would be a place for them share and learn

information and to engage, inform, and inspire other teachers who plan to lead initiatives now and in the future. The story bank would also eventually provide useful, archival information that could be mined for lessons and strategies specific to members' schools and districts.

**Lesson 3: With the right knowledge, skills, and dispositions, teacher leaders can build a teacher coalition of support around MBLT initiatives in their schools.**

The knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to successfully facilitate and lead learning in the classroom differ significantly from those needed to facilitate and lead colleagues. While teachers hone their ability to work with a wide range of student learners, they may not have had the opportunity to build the skills necessary for working with adult learners. And, even if teachers have these skills, they may not have learned how to build and lead teams of adult colleagues to move an initiative forward.

TLI participants found it difficult to resist the inertia that current top-down power dynamics exert to perpetuate themselves. Without an awareness of this inertia, teachers may find themselves leading authoritatively rather than building the initiative collaboratively with their colleagues. They might, for example, bring a group of colleagues together to try and get them to "buy-in" to their ideas, or tell their colleagues what to do differently in order to achieve a pre-defined outcome rather than work together to identify a solution to a problem.

Yet when they learned and utilized skills in telling stories and sharing evidence in their PLCs, as well as in engaging their colleagues in MBLT designs, TLI participants found that their colleagues began to trust them. Colleagues saw them as collaborators interested in finding the best ways to implement an MBLT initiative at the school. TLI participants said that after they began collaborating, they no longer felt like a "lone wolf" trying to enact change on their own. They finally saw real potential for their initiatives to succeed. They also learned that their colleagues wanted to help design the means to school improvement, not merely be the implementers of others' ideas, even when the idea came from a peer.

TLI participants further discovered that, as receptive as their colleagues were to working with a peer to design and implement a new idea, teachers were cautious about supporting an MBLT initiative. They feared such an initiative would only add more work to their already full plates (in life and teaching). For example, many are already committed to other time-consuming initiatives such as adjusting lesson plans to implement Common Core.

When TLI participants framed an MBLT initiative as being about quality, not quantity—with teachers determining how to use existing time more effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their particular school—most found their colleagues more open to considering change. In other words, teachers were more receptive to thinking about how to create "better" learning time rather than adding "more" learning time. With resistant colleagues, TLI participants were able to move initiatives forward by starting a small pilot initiative or opening the conversation with a smaller group of colleagues first, and then expanding the conversation once they were able to demonstrate success.

**Planning Opportunity: Build MBLT support from the ground up and bring more teachers into the design process by encouraging teacher leaders to propose pilot initiatives to answer a problem.**

Encouraging teachers to start small—with a pilot initiative or by growing conversation slowly to build more supporters within a school or district—can help them bring down walls of resistance and give more teachers an opportunity to contribute to the design of next-generation MBLT initiatives before full implementation. Association leaders can learn from TLI participants, who tried a few ways of doing this:

**1. Encourage an "Hour of Exposure."**

One teacher leader set out to bring computer science learning to her school, yet found the process of adding a course to the school's curriculum long and arduous. So while the teacher pursued this bigger goal, she also asked her colleagues if they would be willing to try integrating computer coding into their classrooms for just one hour.

She wrote, "I gave a presentation at our building's staff meeting about the importance of computer coding and [encouraged] school-wide participation in the Hour of Code [a one-hour introduction to computer science, designed to demystify code and show that anybody can learn the basics]. All math teachers had their students do an Hour of Code sometime between December 8 and December 19, 2014 in celebration of Computer Science Education Week.... The message resonated with many staff members. I have had several of my colleagues approach me since then to ask how they can better support coding."<sup>\*</sup>

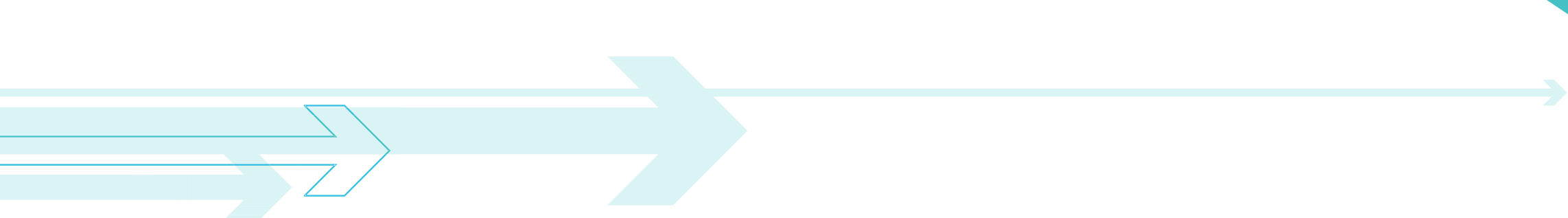
Next year, a computer science course will be offered in this teacher's school, and she expects the course will be offered in more and more schools in her district as the years progress.

**2. Start with a small, voluntary group.**

Another teacher leader proposed to create peer observation at her school—but initially only on an opt-in, voluntary basis. Finding success, she expanded the opportunity slowly. As more people became familiar with the idea and tried it with positive results, they helped convince others to opt-in as well. After seeing a high level of buy-in develop among the staff, the principal was willing to support this teacher's initiative with sustainable structures, such as providing substitute teachers on peer observation days. The teacher wrote, "I have gained a significantly deeper understanding of the basics behind leading group dynamics and navigating difficult situations while honoring varying opinions, needs, and strengths."

**3. Build support among teacher leaders.**

A third teacher leader first introduced his ideas for more effective use of homeroom time to his principal and teachers leaders from various departments. They helped him identify the strengths and weaknesses of his proposal, and in doing so, became invested in the work. These leaders became allies. Since they were knowledgeable about the initiative before they rest of their colleagues got wind of it, they were able to help sell colleagues on the idea's merits and minimize negative assumptions. "I started the policy discussion with my principal, then presented the idea to the school's leadership team," he



said. “Finally, once the leadership had bought into the policy change, I could put them in a position of being shared partners in the change. This allowed them to advocate for the change with their own departments and allowed me to lead from the center.”

**Policy Opportunity: Negotiate any expanded work hours associated with MBLT as an “opt-in” decision for individual teachers, and negotiate additional compensation for those who participate.**

To keep teachers’ minds open as MBLT initiatives get off the ground, state and local associations can advocate for agreements that meet teachers where they are, negotiating to avoid MBLT designs that force teachers to dramatically shift their work and home lives in support of another new initiative. Teachers generally believe in the possibilities associated with MBLT, yet they want to ensure there is flexibility to meet their existing work and life responsibilities. MBLT can be especially hard for teachers who must pick up their own children from day care or school and take them to after-school activities, for example.<sup>23</sup> As association leaders know, bringing teachers into the design and negotiation process helps to identify these concerns.

Middle school literacy teacher Erin Benham, the president of the Meriden Federation of Teachers in Connecticut, said her local affiliate did just that when negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding agreement about MBLT with Meriden Public Schools, a high-poverty district with 9,100 students. Listening to members’ concerns about flexibility, the local association decided to negotiate teachers’ additional payment for an expanded school day as a stipend, entirely separate from teachers’ pay scale. This opened the door for teachers to opt in or opt out—meaning there is no requirement that teachers participate.

According to an *Education Week* article describing the Meriden agreement, those who do commit to the additional 100 minutes a day earn an additional \$7,500 annual stipend. The rest of the teachers are on staggered schedules, with some coming in earlier than they used to but leaving earlier, while others arrive later and stay later. The agreement also provides

teachers flexibility to split the additional time so that, for example, one teacher can stay late on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, while another picks up the hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays.<sup>24</sup> Another idea that can support teachers opting in or opting out is incorporating an integrated “second shift” of “educators” drawn from partnerships with private and/or nonprofit organizations.<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, the second shift could include preservice teachers who need to build classroom management and instructional skills with students.

## Conclusions

TLI participants’ willingness to pioneer MBLT initiatives in their schools and districts—absent the presence of sophisticated policies, incentives, and planning supports—is a testament to teacher leaders’ interest and belief in MBLT’s potential to bring forth transformative changes in teaching and learning. These trailblazers have helped define a reform in its infancy, while also uncovering useful lessons for state and local associations to proactively negotiate ways for teachers to lead future next generation MBLT initiatives. Now it is time for associations to put these lessons to use in ways that heighten the potential for positive outcomes for teachers, students, and schools.

One of the most important lessons from the TLI participants’ experiences is that teachers’ eagerness to lead their own profession results in their strong commitment to using the TLI opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to define and design MBLT initiatives. Learning from colleagues who are also engaged in the challenging work of change—through MBLT or other school redesign work—gives teacher leaders inspiration and ideas for their own work. With the capacity they gain from the TLI, teacher leaders are able to build a teacher coalition of support around MBLT initiatives in their schools and avoid potential pitfalls, such as perpetuating traditional power dynamics by failing to work collaboratively with colleagues.

The lessons emerging from first generation MBLT initiatives also add further credence to researchers’ findings that if next generation initiatives are to drive real advancements in teaching and learning, then

state and local associations must negotiate for initiatives to make better use of time (not merely adding more time for activities teachers already do with students during the regular school day). State and local associations can help fulfill the promise of MBLT by advocating and advancing new policies, incentives, and planning supports that can help promote and sustain improvement efforts by teachers and administrators.

TLI participants’ capstone projects show these advancements could include opening the door to hybrid roles so more teachers can lead initiatives without leaving the classroom. Advancements could also involve negotiating the right conditions for teacher-powered MBLT initiatives through legislation and labor-management partnerships, and developing venture capital funds for teacher leadership of MBLT. Finally, they include encouraging job-embedded professional development opportunities for teachers to spread their teaching expertise.

### About the authors

Kim Farris-Berg and Lori Nazareno, members of the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) School Redesign Team, prepared this report with Barnett Berry. CTQ is a national nonprofit that seeks to create a high-quality education system for all students—driven by the bold ideas and expert practices of teachers. CTQ connects, readies, and mobilizes teachers to transform the profession.

Barnett Berry is founder and CEO of the CTQ, which launched the nation’s first virtual network of teacher leaders in 2003. The CTQ Collaboratory now includes more than 10,000 members—fueling unique opportunities for teachers to lead boldly without leaving the classroom. Barnett is a former classroom teacher, think tank analyst, senior state education agency policy leader, and university professor. His two books, *TEACHING 2030* and *Teacherpreneurs: Innovative Teachers Who Lead But Don’t Leave*, frame a bold vision for the profession’s future. Lori cofounded the Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy, a teacher-powered school in Denver, Colorado. She is currently a CTQ Teacher Leader in Residence, and in that capacity she developed the school redesign curriculum and facilitated both the Innovative Leadership and School Redesign learning strands for the first cohort of the Teacher Leadership Initiative.

Kim is a teacher leadership strategist and consultant to CTQ and others, where she helps teachers and the broader education community reimagine the possibilities for student learning and the teaching profession. She is lead researcher and author of *Trusting Teachers with School Success: What Happens When Teachers Call the Shots* (R&L Education, 2012).

## Endnotes

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