Improving educational outcomes is a key priority for the current administration with various new broad-ranging federal efforts such as RTTT and i3, as well as specific programmatic funding such as 21st CCLC and SES. One strategy that is integral to many interventions is to increase the amount of instructional time available for students to learn, whether the increased time occurs within specific subject areas, in the length of the school day or year, or in other organizational/structural arrangements.

Efforts to understand and assess whether and how additional time for learning effects student outcomes face numerous challenges—both because the shape of the interventions differs so substantially, and because the effect of time, in and of itself, is difficult to disentangle from multi-faceted school improvement initiatives. Prior research has examined different approaches to increasing instructional time, and the results so far have been mixed (Redd et al. 2012, Patall et al., 2010).

This symposia includes research among the most rigorous that exists in this field about four distinct efforts that increase instructional time, from increasing the amount of instructional time for literacy or math (Dougherty; Cortes, Goodman & Nomi) to a state initiative that funds increased instructional hours with some flexibility to schools about how to allocate this time (Checkoway et al.), to providing students with a different and specific approach to education through KIPP charter schools that includes a longer school day and year (Gleason et al.).

The symposia aims to examine the implications of the lack of consistent results for policy decisions and school leaders, discuss this set of research in the context of additional existing and planned research in this field, and focus on additional opportunities for this research to inform future research design, measurement, and analysis.