NEW REPORT DOCUMENTS GROWING MOVEMENT TO EXPAND LEARNING TIME ACROSS UNITED STATES

In New Survey, 75% Say More Learning Time Will Help Prepare Students for Future Success

BOSTON, MA – States and school districts around the country are making significant headway in their efforts to develop and implement innovative and cost-effective ways to expand learning time for students, according to a new policy report from the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL) and the Education Commission of the States.

Learning Time in America: Trends to Reform the American School Calendar, an update to a July 2011 report of the same name, provides a comprehensive overview of legislative and policy developments at the federal, state, and district levels to close achievement gaps and improve public school through expanding learning time over the two years since the release of that report. The report also includes results from a national survey, commissioned by NCTL and administered in February by the nonpartisan firm KRC Research, showing broad support for more learning time. Three-quarters of respondents – including 80 percent of parents with children enrolled in public schools – agreed that more time in school will better prepare students for success in college and the workforce.

“It is clear that we are at a tipping point in the movement to improve teaching and learning by expanding the school calendar,” said Jennifer Davis, NCTL’s co-founder and president. “Policymakers and educational leaders all over the United States are embracing expanded learning time as a critical strategy for improving teaching and accelerating student achievement, particularly in high-poverty schools. And Americans overwhelmingly agree that more learning time will help America’s students be prepared for the future.”

The report details dozens of policy and legislative developments that have already led to expanded learning time or that pave the way for it in the years to come. These developments include:

- Five states (Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Tennessee) in December 2012 announced their participation in the TIME Collaborative, an effort led by NCTL and the Ford Foundation to expand learning time for thousands of students in select schools in those states.
- In New York, in addition to the state’s participation in the TIME Collaborative, the state legislature this year provided $20 million to fund a proposal by Governor Andrew Cuomo to
create a competitive grant program to fund a 25 percent expansion of learning time in schools with redesign plans approved by the state.

- The Florida legislature in 2012 designated a specific funding stream to support the addition of one hour of instruction in literacy for all students in the 100 lowest-performing elementary schools in the state.
- Since 2008, seven states have passed legislation that create “innovation” or “turnaround” districts or schools. Though the specifics vary by state, across all the efforts, the aim is to grant districts or schools autonomies over budgets, staffing, and school schedules.
- Two states – Iowa and North Carolina – formed commissions specifically to study the need to modernize the school calendar.
- School districts have also played a significant role in expanding learning time. For example, Chicago significantly expanded both the school day and the school year for all 340,000 students in its traditional district schools. Elizabeth, New Jersey has created eight-hour days for all 30 of its district schools.

“We are seeing a policy convergence today like no other,” said Jeremy Anderson, president of the Education Commission of the States. “With the push in many states for all third graders to read proficiently before moving on, implementation of the rigorous Common Core State Standards in reading and math, widespread initiatives to greatly increase the number of students who graduate high school college- and career-ready, getting more high-quality student learning into the existing school calendar can pose a tremendous challenge. Expanding quality learning time is one proven solution to help all students reach greater levels of achievement.”

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR TIME & LEARNING

The National Center on Time & Learning is dedicated to expanding learning time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education. Through research, public policy, and technical assistance, NCTL supports initiatives that add more school time to help children meet the demands of the 21st Century.

ABOUT THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

The mission of the Education Commission of the States is to help states develop effective policy and practice for public education by providing data, research, analysis and leadership, as well as by facilitating collaboration, the exchange of ideas among the states and long-range strategic thinking.

ABOUT THE KRC RESEARCH SURVEY

The nationwide survey was administered online among 1,032 adults 18 years and older, with fieldwork occurring between February 7th and 10th, 2013.

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