State Farm® Companies Foundation and ECS Launch Three-Year Campaign to Link Citizenship and Learning in Schools

Denver, CO – Working together, State Farm® — through a grant from the State Farm® Companies Foundation and the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and its National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) — plan to help improve the quality and sustainability of service-learning.

The $750,000 grant will provide the resources for the NCLC to help policymakers and school leaders build on the quality, integration and sustainability of service-learning over the next three years.

Service-learning is a teaching and learning method used to engage students and teachers in their communities — in ways directly aligned with their curriculum. In short, service-learning is doing good for academic reasons.

“State Farm strongly supports service-learning as a strategy that addresses many issues — from citizenship to academic achievement”, says Kathy Payne, Senior Director of Education Leadership at State Farm. “We’re pleased to work with NCLC to help extend the practice to more students and schools with strong policies supporting its integration into schools.”

NCLC Executive Director Terry Pickeral and ECS senior staff view service-learning as a means to address central questions all states face. Through collaborations such as one with the Mississippi Department of Education, NCLC has helped engage policymakers, students and teachers to focus on dropout prevention. According to Pickeral, the benefits gained from service-learning may help problems like high dropout rates, while also supporting community organizations and creating a new generation of engaged citizens.

Grant funds from the State Farm® Companies Foundation will help build a framework and set of strategies to strengthen and sustain high-quality service-learning through state and district policy and school practice. Specifically, NCLC will host regional and national forums, create laboratories for innovation and engage education leaders in policies related to service-learning. The work will demonstrate how student engagement, collaborative leadership and community improvement all contribute to academic success.

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The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS (www.ecs.org) was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

The State Farm Companies Foundation (http://www.statefarm.com/about/part_spos/grants/foundati.asp), established in 1963, is an independent private foundation. The Foundation is committed to helping raise elementary and secondary student achievement levels and to supporting key higher education initiatives. To learn more about State Farm’s education initiatives please contact Kathy Payne (kathy.h.payne.jda2@statefarm.com).
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