

## Extending Learning Time in Texas Schools

Educators and policymakers recognize extended learning time as a key strategy to improve academic achievement in schools. Learning time in Texas is based on the conventional school calendar of 180 six-and-a-half-hour days, which does not allow for the depth of education necessary for all students to be successful. Texas now has the opportunity to join national leaders in education reform by implementing programs designed to accelerate school reform and raise student proficiency.

### Proposed policy recommendations:

- The state should establish a blue ribbon commission or taskforce to study the impact of extended learning time on school success and evaluate best practices, school models, and incentives for building community partnerships.
- The state should also establish a pilot grant program that provides competitive grants for schools dedicated to implementing an extended learning time model.

**Rationale:** The public school system in Texas needs reform in order to improve the educational achievement and attainment of its students. The data clearly indicate that students are both failing to master basic subjects and dropping out of high school at alarmingly high rates. Moreover, these deficiencies are even greater across low-income and minority populations, and this achievement gap is not insignificant in a state where 59% of students are economically disadvantaged and 69% are minority. Increasing time spent on task in the classroom through extending the school day and/or year has demonstrated proven success in fostering increased academic performance and closing achievement gaps.

### Scope of the problem:

- This year, 71% of Texas districts failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress standards set by No Child Left Behind.
- In 2011, only 27% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade Texas students performed at or above the proficiency level in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and only 40% performed at or above the proficiency level in math.
- 58% of White Texas 8<sup>th</sup> grade students scored at the proficiency level in math on the NAEP, as opposed to 21% of Black students and 31% of Latino students.

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