

# HOUSTON A<sup>+</sup> CHALLENGE

## Written Testimony Submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee Interim Charge Hearing on Extended Time, September 13, 2012

*On behalf of*

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### **Perspective**

With the ambitious goal of all Texas students being post-secondary ready when they complete high school, the passage of HB 3 ushered in a new era that will require schools to operate differently if most students are to reach this goal. In 2011, however, 83 percent of the 225,451 middle school students in the Houston metro region fell short of the “commended” level in all subjects, and were therefore at risk of not being post-secondary ready. Indeed, the challenges are enormous, especially as schools are faced with decreasing budgets.

The benefits of more time on task – especially for the neediest children – are widely documented, and constitute a common sense solution for increasing learning. For decades, summer school has been the first-choice option for school districts to address the needs of struggling students by lengthening the school year. According to the National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL), today there are at least 1,000 schools across the U.S. offering an expanded schedule. However, an extensive study released last month by the Wallace Foundation indicates that policy makers should take care to avoid simplistic approaches of extending time: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/extended-learning-time/Documents/Expanding-Time%20for-Learning-Both-Inside-and-Outside-the-Classroom.pdf> The rigorous standards wisely adopted with HB 3 – coupled with limited resources – will mandate that Texas look through a fresh, innovative lens at ways to extend time.

### **Challenges**

1. A recent study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that 26 states did not believe they would be able to continue with extended learning time after federal grants ended.
2. Extended time is not always embraced by stakeholders, including parents.  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/what-new-research-on-extended-school-day-says/2012/04/18/gIQAnmV3RT\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/what-new-research-on-extended-school-day-says/2012/04/18/gIQAnmV3RT_blog.html)
3. Multiple studies indicate that simply extending time without consideration of student achievement data or the effectiveness of the extended time can yield disappointing results.  
<http://www.educationsector.org/publications/clock-rethinking-way-schools-use-time>

### **Examples of Innovative and Effective Extended Learning Time**

1. Public/private partnerships, such as Citizen Schools: <http://www.citizenschools.org>
2. Use of technology to individualize and extend instruction, such as Rocketship:  
<http://www.rsed.org/about/Academic-Performance.cfm>

3. Coaching principals to improve scheduling during the existing school day, by prioritizing time and making every minute count – allowing for more time on task for struggling students, as demonstrated by Houston A+ Challenge Network schools: <http://www.houstonaplus.org>
4. Extending time available for teachers and administrators to evaluate students and design instruction better tailored for their needs for more effective instruction during the school day: [http://www.timeandlearning.org/files/TWS\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.timeandlearning.org/files/TWS_Executive_Summary.pdf)

### **Policy Recommendations**

1. Establish a grant and clearinghouse to evaluate and fund pilot proposals for promising innovations for extending time, including creative use of technology, staffing models, school schedules and community partnerships
2. Provide incentive pay for highly effective teachers (measured at least in part by student outcomes) to teach in existing summer school programs
3. Support and expand existing effective extended time programs through matching funds
4. Evaluate the effectiveness on student achievement of mandates for seat time as dictated by the Carnegie Unit as an organizing principle for high schools
5. Extend time by funding effective full-day Pre-K to lessen the need for later remediation

**For questions or more details regarding this submission, please contact:**

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