



## A Vision for the Future of American Education How the Recovery Act Can Help State Leaders Realize It

The opportunity to dramatically improve educational outcomes for all young people is here. With resolute political will from the statehouse to the White House, and new funding streams, such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, it is possible for us to dramatically rethink the whole day for students so that learning experiences are seamless and unrestricted by walls, clocks or calendars.

While unacceptably high dropout rates and untold economic losses confront the nation today, we must all play a role in making sure that the future is different for our young people. We need to give students hands-on experiences in their schools and communities, access to technology and exposure to a broader range of possibilities. We need to re-imagine how, when and where young people learn. We need *New Day for Learning*.

*New Day for Learning* is not a curriculum or one-size fits all program; it is a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for learning that builds on a foundation of core academics by leveraging community resources to incorporate strategies such as hands-on learning, working in teams and problem-solving. Before-, afterschool and summer programs are a few of the places in and out of the classroom that are already using these learning approaches to engage students and increase their chances for success.

If we want our students to excel academically, explore careers and develop the rigorous knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in today's global society, we need to start thinking and talking about education differently. Imagine all students everywhere fully engaged in learning. Imagine a new culture of community-wide responsibility for education. It's possible. It's *New Day for Learning*.

### What does *New Day for Learning* look like?

**Whether in an urban, suburban or rural area, *New Day for Learning*:**

#### **Expands the definition of student success**

Reading, math and science are critical to a solid educational foundation but must be bolstered by applied skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork. Beyond merely teaching students these skills, we must thoughtfully assess them to ensure that today's young people are fully prepared to succeed in school, work and life.

#### **Uses research-based knowledge about how students learn best**

Students can't learn if they are not engaged. Educators and community stakeholders must utilize research-based knowledge about how students learn best to effectively frame their programs and instruction.

#### **Fosters collaboration across all sectors**

To focus all resources on supporting academic and developmental goals for students, new collaborative structures must be built across sectors in communities and up and down government hierarchies. The vital involvement of community,

business, civic and municipal leaders, parents and social service providers is critical to student success and pays economic, civic and social dividends to all stakeholders.

#### **Integrates various learning approaches and places**

Engaging strategies that incorporate the arts, technology, service learning and apprenticeships can amplify core academic learning and provide students with opportunities for enriching their education and connecting it with the adult world that they will enter. Schools are just one of the many places in the community where learning and student success can happen.

#### **Provides new opportunities for leadership and professional development**

While most current leadership development and certification programs are school-based, the importance of community building skills is growing. Teachers and youth development staff can forge partnerships that result in heightened professionalism for both — and in better outcomes for students.

# How Can State Leaders and Policymakers Help Realize *New Day for Learning* in America?

**The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides a critical moment in which state leaders, advocates and policymakers can guide policy to create a *New Day for Learning* for the young people of their state.**

Implementation of the Recovery Act is a tremendous opportunity to move forward on meeting our goal to re-imagine how, when and where young people learn.

States can leverage opportunities in the Recovery Act to drive education reform to ensure that every young person succeeds in school and work, as well as to save or increase jobs. In fact, President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have highlighted innovative ways to use and expand learning time as a key component of both their education reform and Recovery Act implementation agendas.

While the scope of the Recovery Act is extremely large, funds can be focused on one or all of the following priorities to affect significant change. The examples below illustrate how state leaders can play a role in promoting change at the local level, as well as leading change at the state level.

**Promote change by encouraging local leaders to support effective before-, afterschool and summer learning programs as a first step towards rethinking how, when and where young people learn. State leaders can encourage and incentivize local communities to use the following funding sources from the Recovery Act to support their efforts:**

- Title I Funds can be used to create and/or expand summer programs this summer and before- and afterschool programs in the coming school year. The U.S. Department of Education has encouraged the use of Title I Recovery Act funds for expanded learning programs such as summer and afterschool.
- Technology Funds can be used to expand and deepen the technological infrastructures of afterschool and summer learning programs to enhance their ability to engage students in new ways that expand their learning opportunities and interest in learning.
- Summer Youth Employment funds can be used to provide jobs and other activities for older youth that promote college and career readiness.
- State Stabilization and Innovation funds can be used to support innovative summer and afterschool initiatives that complement school-day learning and ensure at-risk students don't fall through the cracks but instead re-engage in learning and improve academic achievement.
- The supplemental education services (SES) portion of Title I can be used to support summer and afterschool programs. While districts can apply to waive the SES set-aside, they should be encouraged to do so only with appropriate justification. In cases where SES waivers are requested, districts should be encouraged to use their Title I funds to support other afterschool and summer initiatives that complement the school day.

“...as we foster innovation in where our children are learning, let's also foster innovation in when our children are learning. That's why I'm calling for us not only to expand effective after-school programs, but to rethink the school day to incorporate more time — whether during the summer or through expanded-day programs for children who need it.”

- President Barack Obama

**Recovery Act funds can also be used to lead change at the state level by creating data systems and assessments that capture the important information needed to guide young people to success and thereby help expand the definition of student success.**

- **Data Systems.** While working to implement the longitudinal data systems included in the Recovery Act, there is an opportunity to ensure that the systems measure the achievement of all students in a way that will help schools and teachers improve teaching and learning. The data required can be viewed as a floor in which states can innovate and build upon.

- Establish a collaboration with a variety of partners such as Pre-Kindergarten to postsecondary education, community-based organizations and businesses.
- Identify the key elements that can lead to a redefined set of academic skills that should be measured to achieve a full understanding of student success and to drive more better and effective practice.

This will provide the data to not only judge academic progress and other indicators of student success, but the effectiveness of a wide range of programs that support academic success, such as programs for afterschool, summer programs, teacher recruitment, teacher training and professional development.

- **Integrated Comprehensive Assessment System.** Jump ahead of reform and lead it into a new era and work with governors and state education agencies to be a pilot state for a cutting-edge assessment system. This system would include formative and summative assessments; be geared toward helping both teachers and students; related directly to the data systems; address the needs of English language learners and children with disabilities; and support strong accountability for academic achievement and continuous improvement in instruction. These systems could assess more than just academics (but continue to support accountability for academics). Such systems would drive better practice, effective programming, targeted services and target professional development. States should consider adaptive testing and new technologies in creating these systems.

## Resources for Implementation

There are many nonprofit organizations with the expertise to provide technical assistance, research, evaluation and strategic support to help ensure effective implementation of these ideas.

- The National Center for Summer Learning at The John Hopkins University provides expert advice and technical assistance to states and communities on how to use Recovery Act funds to quickly start or expand effective summer programs. [SummerLearning.org](http://SummerLearning.org)
- The Afterschool Alliance provides tools and resources that help afterschool programs and state and local afterschool leaders better understand how Recovery Act funds can benefit local communities, students and families. [AfterschoolAlliance.org](http://AfterschoolAlliance.org)
- The Finance Project shares tools and research that explain how to maximize resources and create strategies to implement effective programs. [FinanceProject.org](http://FinanceProject.org)
- The George Lucas Educational Foundation documents success stories to not only encourage effective uses of educational technology, but also to provide examples of how afterschool and summer programs are providing students with experiential and innovative learning environments. [Edutopia.org](http://Edutopia.org)

“During the Cold War, our country was in an arms race. The United States also excelled in the space race. Today, our country is in another important race — “an education race” — and America must move faster in order to have a strong economy. America’s students must have all of the tools they need to complete a higher education and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to become and remain competitive in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.”

– Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY)

“With the President’s leadership, with a bipartisan Congress that’s really committed to education, with support of great, great students and teachers and parents and principals around the country, we have a once in a lifetime historic opportunity to make things better for our children, to stimulate the economy short-term and long-term to better educate our way to a stronger economy, which is the only way we can do it.”

– U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

