THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

EXTENDED LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Since 1998, the Council of Chief State School Officers has been actively engaged in research and development activities to gain knowledge about high-quality extended learning and development opportunities in order to build state capacity in the implementation and maintenance of such programs. Our efforts have been focused on developing shared understanding about characteristics of high-quality after-school programs with measurable outcomes and of effective state policies and initiatives that support such programs and providing technical assistance to state education agencies in their work with statewide after-school networks to ensure improvement in both the quality and quantity of extended learning opportunities within their states.

LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY, SERVICE

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THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A Policy Statement of the Council of Chief State School Officers

Adopted January 2006

INTRODUCTION

The Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSOs') vision for our nation's schools is to ensure high standards of performance for **every one** of our children and prepare **each child** to succeed as a productive member of society. We believe that all children can reach their potential when given high-quality, adequate supports that address the unique needs and possibilities of every student. As a nation, we must commit to an early and sustained investment in high-quality education for our young people who face increased risks in their daily lives and need additional skills to succeed as workers, parents, and citizens.

The Council believes that students will be best poised to achieve to their fullest potential when they have full access to a world class system of education that includes high-quality preschool; rigorous and engaging curricula; highly qualified, caring teachers; well-resourced, safe schools; effective school leadership and administration; coordinated services for addressing the mental, physical, and nutritional needs of youth; strong connections among schools, families, and

communities; and increased opportunities to extend and expand learning both in and beyond the classroom. We assert that re-envisioning time and learning needs to be an integral component of any comprehensive K-12 education reform strategy to successfully equip students with the academic and developmental skills necessary for long-term success.

It has been more than a decade since the National Commission on Time and Learning asserted that "learning in America is a prisoner of time" and called for educators to reinvent schools around learning, not time (National Commission on Time and Learning, 1994). Since then, educators and researchers have continued to expand their perspectives about when, where, and how children learn. Moving beyond the traditional model of a five-to six-hour classroom day and a 180-day school year, educators are recognizing that increased expectations of student achievement need to be matched by increased supports, resources, and time engaged in learning in order for students to be successful. Within the context of the traditional school day, efforts to extend the time students spend engaged in academic learning include block scheduling, full-day kindergarten, and reduced class sizes. In addition, states and districts are increasingly utilizing technology to facilitate student learning beyond the classroom including the use of online programming, virtual schools, and distance learning initiatives. These efforts comprise a critically important aspect of school reform and improvement initiatives. However, extended learning opportunities (ELOs) that occur outside the regular school day offer additional opportunities to provide academic enrichment and support. ELOs often utilize varied approaches within smaller learning environments that are distinct from the traditional classroom setting. Considered collectively, increases in quality instructional time during the regular school day and access to high-quality ELOs provide essential opportunities for strengthening academic learning for students who lag behind, and accelerating learning for students who are already meeting standards (CCSSO, 2001).

Defining Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs)

Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) are initiatives that provide safe, structured environments for students outside of the regular school day. Programs may be administered by youth-serving organizations or schools, often in partnership with local agencies and/or community and faith-based organizations. ELOs include before- and after-school programs; Saturday, weekend, and summer programs; extended day/year initiatives, distance learning, and early childhood education initiatives. ELOs vary significantly in duration, goals, structure, and content; however, they typically offer a range of programming that includes academic support (e.g., enrichment, acceleration, remediation, individualized tutoring, etc.) combined with recreation, mentoring, sports, and other extracurricular activities. School-based ELOs are housed in schools and typically staffed with both school and community-based personnel. ELO programs that are school-linked make explicit efforts to align program goals to support student academic success, establish ongoing communications with school personnel responsible for curriculum and instruction, and build relationships with the school administration.

ELOs represent a vital component of the range of structural supports and services that should be available within a highly-functioning educational system. As a critical element of middle and high school reform, extended learning programs can help older youth develop and refine their core

skills and competencies and provide them with additional experiences in preparation for graduation, higher education, and entry into the workforce. As an integrated component of the elementary grades, these types of initiatives can help students meet and exceed challenging state academic standards, and meet the increased needs of working parents to have safe, structured environments for their children during non-school hours. As an element of school readiness, extended learning programs can help pre-school children successfully transition into the elementary grades. At all grade levels and developmental stages, extended learning initiatives provide opportunities for enrichment, personal growth, and engagement.

Educators, parents, community leaders, the business sector, and policymakers—all who have a stake in the nation's future—must join together to make available to every student, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or geographic location, an education system that offers a continuum of supports and services designed to prepare them to meet the challenges of the 21st century. High-quality ELOs must be among those supports and services.

THE CHALLENGES

Our nation continues to struggle with persistent gaps in academic achievement and educational attainment. Despite recent gains, African American, Latino, Native American, and low-income students continue to lag behind white, Asian, and affluent students in academic

performance (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005a, 2005b). Moreover, international comparisons of test scores show students in the United States overall lagging in performance in comparison to students in other industrialized nations (Brown, et al., 2005). Many challenges, including persistent educational disparities, changes in family structure, students' physical and emotional health, and economic, racial, and ethnic inequalities, confront our students as they strive to meet academic standards and acquire the skills necessary to succeed in today's global competitive economy (Lee, 2002). Exacerbating many of these enduring inequities is the issue of time:

Too little time in the classroom. On average, students in countries with which the United States compares student performance spend 13 more days annually in the classroom; over a 12-year period this amounts to 156 days, or nearly one school year (Center for American Progress, 2005). Moreover, the typical 180-day school calendar in the United States reflects time allocated for school, and does not consider the actual amount of time spent engaged in academic learning, a truer measure of our ability to provide appropriate learning environments for intellectual growth (WestEd, 1998). If students, especially those in low-performing school districts, are to meet academic standards, they will need increased time engaged in high-quality learning activities.

Use of out-of-school time. Boredom and a lack of interesting things to do are widespread among America's middle and high school students. A majority of parents, regardless of income or race, find summer the most difficult time to find productive activities for their children (Public Agenda, 2004). Because student activity routines have a greater relationship to achievement than do social and cultural background variables, students need help using time wisely. Students who spend less time engaged in learning in school also spend less time learning outside of school and spend more time in leisure activities. Research shows that successful students engage in more structured, high-quality learning activities outside of school than low

achievers as well as allocating more structured time to learning activities while in school. This discrepancy contributes to a growing gap in cumulative learning hours that translates into an expanding achievement gap throughout a student's academic career (CCSSO, 2001b). Students from low-income families are also more likely to have less access to structured after-school opportunities that support wise use of time, compounding the challenges to meeting academic standards.

Summer learning loss. Extended summer vacations associated with the traditional 9- or 10-month school year result in students losing knowledge and mastery of subject matter. On average, children lose one month on achievement test scores over the summer months. As a result, teachers lose time at the beginning of the school year reviewing material taught during the previous year. Low-income children and students of color, who often do not have access to the summer learning opportunities of their more affluent peers, experience the greatest summer learning loss, further exacerbating achievement gaps (Cooper, et al., 1996).

Limited access to enrichment opportunities. Students most at-risk for poor outcomes, frequently those from low-income families or unsafe neighborhoods, have the most to gain from extended learning initiatives because they are often the farthest behind and most likely to stay behind without additional learning and developmental opportunities. However, many students who require extra help with their course work have difficulty finding high-quality structured environments and supportive adults or other students who can offer needed assistance. Fewer opportunities for participating in high-quality, affordable extended learning programs are available to low-income students (Public Agenda, 2004).

Unmet demand for extended learning opportunities. According to a survey conducted by the Afterschool Alliance, more than 15 million of the children who do not currently participate in an after-school program, including nearly 4 million of the 14 million children in self-care, would be likely to participate in an after-school program if one were available in their community (Afterschool Alliance, 2004). A survey funded by The Wallace Foundation found that 69 percent of low-income and 79 percent of minority students would be interested in a summer program that would help them with schoolwork (Public Agenda, 2004).

Changes in family structure and employment patterns. The growing numbers of working two-parent and single parent households present a tremendous challenge to families with school-age children, as they often struggle to find affordable, high-quality care during the afterschool hours when school has ended and parents are still at work. According to a study conducted by the Afterschool Alliance and J.C. Penney, in households where both parents or a single parent work outside the home, one in three children spends some time in self-care during the afterschool hours. Overall, approximately 14 million children in grades K-12 spend some portion of the afterschool hours in self-care (Afterschool Alliance, 2004). Unstructured leisure time, combined with significant amounts of time spent "hanging out with friends" during non-school hours, has been linked to an increased likelihood of a student becoming a victim or

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perpetrator of violence, and an increase in risk-taking behaviors including sexual activity, and alcohol and tobacco use (Blum, Beuhring, & Rinehart, 2000). Moreover, student academic success in school has been strongly linked to high levels of parental expectations and support beyond the school doors. What parents know about and expect of their children's out-of-school activities and time use matters more than socioeconomic status, family structure, and other background factors (CCSSO, 2001b).

Lack of student engagement and connectedness. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that 31 percent of students in grades 7-12 report not feeling connected to school. Students who do not feel connected to school are more likely to be less successful academically as well as engage in risky behaviors including early and unprotected sex, drug abuse, tobacco use, poor nutrition, sedentary lifestyles, drinking alcohol and driving, and suicide. Emotional distress and risky health behaviors are not confined to urban, inner city

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schools. Little variation exists in terms of race and ethnicity, gender, or school level; in fact, the highest rates of cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use occur in affluent, suburban schools (Blum, McNeeley, & Rinehart, 2002).

Gaps in school readiness. African-American, Latino, and Native American children from low-income families and less educated families are often less prepared to begin school, are farthest behind at school entry, achieve less during early school years, and are at continued risk for academic failure during adolescence when compared to their more affluent counterparts (Coley, 2002).

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES

Overcoming the challenge of time and the related issues of student readiness and engagement will require the concerted marshalling of resources in the public and private sector at all levels of society. It will also require that educators fundamentally rethink antiquated notions about when and where learning takes place, expand current efforts to make maximum use of existing time, utilize new and emergent technologies as tools to increase learning and engagement, and work in partnership with communities and parents to significantly ratchet up

the diversity and range of extended learning opportunities available to children and youth.

Simply extending time may have little impact on academic achievement and other positive student outcomes; however, research suggests that *well-designed* and *carefully implemented* extended learning initiatives can offer academic, social, and health benefits for students. These benefits include:

Increases in student academic achievement. A variety of extended and expanded learning strategies have been positively linked to increases in academic achievement. After-school programs report positive impacts on student standardized test scores in reading and mathematics as well as increases in school attendance (Afterschool Alliance, 2004). These impacts have also been shown to affect lowest performing students at greater rates than other students in after-school programs (CCSSO, 2005a). In addition, the benefits of high-quality after-school programs are greater than other forms of after-school care. A longitudinal study of after-school program participation and the development of academic performance found that academic achievement, motivation, and teachers' expectations for success were significantly higher for low-income students who participated in a high-quality after-school program than for students who received after-school care from a parent or legal guardian, non-adult (self or sibling care), or another adult (relatives, babysitters, adult friends) (Mahoney, et al., 2005).

High-quality preschool initiatives have been strongly linked to increased school preparedness and a narrowing of the achievement gap upon school entry (Gormley & Phillips, 2003). Full-day kindergarten programs that are developmentally appropriate have also been shown to positively impact the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of children (Martinez & Snider, 2001). Moreover, full-day kindergarten initiatives targeting low-income and minority students have demonstrated success in better preparing them for grade level work than half-day programs (Nielson & Cooper-Martin, 2002).

Extended day and year programs, when *combined* with additional learning opportunities, also show promise for continued student academic achievement (Teixeira, 2004). More traditional extra-curricular afterschool activities including interscholastic and intramural sports, bands and orchestras, scholastic clubs, and drama programs show potential in positively impacting social and emotional development, as well as cultivating habits associated with long-term academic success (e.g., critical-thinking and problem-solving skills) (Brown, et al., 2005).

Offsetting summer learning loss. Research suggests that summer learning programs can help to bridge achievement differences between wealthy and poor children. Carefully designed and implemented programs that focus on academic enrichment or removing learning deficiencies can have a positive impact on participants' knowledge and skills. The impact of summer learning programs is likely to be greatest when they include a structured curriculum that emphasizes the development and acquisition of reading and math skills, provide individuated instruction in a small-group setting, and foster high levels of participation by disadvantaged students attending low-performing or high-poverty schools (CCSSO, 2005b).

Reducing the incidence of risk-taking, negative, and unsafe behaviors. Students, particularly older youth, participating in extended learning opportunities report that the programs help them feel safe and avoid fighting. School absences, tardiness, suspensions, and expulsions decrease among participants as do risk-taking behaviors including alcohol abuse and teen pregnancy. Improved social skills among participating students include the ability to maintain self-control and make constructive choices about behaviors (Afterschool Alliance, 2005).

Increases in student engagement and connectedness. School connectedness, by reducing students' involvement in risky health behaviors, protects adolescents' well-being, which can contribute to higher achievement. Moreover, students who are connected to school are more responsive to programs designed to improve academic achievement (CCSSO, 2001a).

Support for working parents. Parents say that their children's participation in extended learning programs significantly reduces their worries about their children's safety, gives them more energy in the evening, reduces time away from work, allows them to work more hours or

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attend classes or job training, and contributes to better work performance or finding a better job. Parents also report greater awareness of community agencies and their services (Afterschool Alliance, 2005).

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Recent studies have identified a number of best practices as essential for fostering positive academic outcomes for students who participate in extended learning opportunities. State education agencies (SEAs) can play a critical role in developing and sustaining high-quality, effective programs by considering the following best practices when creating or revising state policy:

◆ **Careful planning and design.** High-quality programs employ a thorough planning process that has a well-defined mission and clear goals based on the assessed needs of students, schools, and the community. Program planning involves all stakeholders—district leaders, school administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and support staff. In the early planning stages, programs are aligned with school reform and improvement efforts. State, district, or school improvement plans incorporate extended learning opportunities as part of a larger continuum of supports and services for at-risk students. Program design

should allow for maximum and sustained participation as studies indicate that students who participate regularly and for two or more years make the greatest gains.

◆ **Evaluation for continuous improvement.** Effective program design incorporates evaluation for the purposes of monitoring program effectiveness and continuous improvement. The evaluation design is aligned to program goals and incorporates multiple impact measures, including academic and non-academic outcomes. Evaluation results are shared broadly with all stakeholders and used by program leaders to refine and strengthen program practices.

◆ **Strong administrative and organization capacity.** Strong leadership and good administrative practices contribute to the success and sustainability of a program. Although administrative and management structures may vary based on whether programs are developed by districts, schools, or in partnership with community-based organizations, program leaders have established processes for selecting program staff, soliciting student participation, monitoring program effectiveness, and providing general oversight. In addition, logistical concerns including transportation, food service, supplies, and school maintenance are attended to, as needed.

◆ **Funding.** Sustainable programs are able to tap multiple state, local, and federal funding sources. This includes funds from state departments of education, other state agencies (e.g., departments of health and human services, childcare), federal categorical programs, private and community foundations, and locally-based organizations and agencies. Funding is consistent and equitable across all program sites with priority given to serving at-risk student populations.

◆ **Alignment with school curriculum.** Strong programs maintain an academic focus that integrates the regular classroom curriculum while varying instructional methods and incorporating materials that are fun and engaging. Learning activities differ from those offered during the school day and are experiential, hands-on, tailored to identified student skills and needs, offered in a unique and inviting environment, and delivered by qualified staff.

◆ **Physical and psychological safety.** Quality programs maintain a safe and comfortable environment and provide opportunities for developing consistent, caring relationships with responsible adults who provide guidance and set high standards for success (Vandell, et al., 2004).

◆ **Strong professional development and support.** Staff members receive pre-service and ongoing professional development that integrates the goals of the school curriculum and teaches skills necessary to deliver high-quality programming that complements but does not duplicate traditional classroom instruction. Program staff salaries are comparable to and competitive with those of school-day staff.

◆ **Parent and community involvement.** Programs are housed in neighborhood schools to foster sustained collaboration among schools, parents, and communities which research indicates correlate with positive outcomes for students. Parent and community volunteers are encouraged to contribute to program design and logistical components.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL SUPPORT FOR EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Extended learning programming has expanded rapidly over the past decade, spurred in great part by federal support including the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), Supplemental Educational Services (SES), and the Title I provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The 21st CCLC program increases learning opportunities for children and youth by enabling schools to stay open longer and providing safe places for a range of activities from homework help

to arts education. U.S. Department of Education funding for this program, which has grown from $40 million in 1998 to nearly $1 billion in 2005, flows directly to states as a formula grant based on the states' share of Title I, Part A. States use those allocations to make competitive awards to local communities. The SES provision aims to increase learning opportunities by requiring districts to make tutoring available during non-school hours for eligible students attending schools not making adequate yearly progress. In addition, the Title I provisions of NCLB explicitly encourage the use of

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extended learning programs as a strategy for increasing learning time. These funds, both targeted and schoolwide, are increasingly being tapped by school administrators to support ELOs for eligible students (Education Research Funding Council, 2005).

In addition to these federal efforts, many states and local districts have taken the initiative to establish and fund a wide variety of extended learning opportunities for elementary, middle, and high school youth as a means of providing a safe haven for young people, improving academic achievement, and reducing risk-taking behaviors. Since 2000, approximately 19 states have proposed, or enacted legislation focused on establishing extended day initiatives, amending existing programs, or creating infrastructure to sustain ELOs (Education Commission of the States, Recent Activities). Numerous states have also appropriated substantial sums to support before- and after-school, weekend, and summer programs to raise student outcomes, particularly in low-performing schools. Finally, an increasing number of states have enacted policies specifically focused on increasing instructional time and school readiness: 44 states and the District of Columbia presently fund pre-kindergarten programs; 9 states in the 2003-04 academic year required districts to offer full-day kindergarten (ECS, Quick Facts).

Local superintendents and individual principals are also looking for programs, funds, and partners to assist in increasing opportunities for learning in the out-of-school hours. Importantly, they are integrating these conversations into broader discussions about school improvement, school reform, and community education (CCSSO, 2001b). Businesses and community organizations are increasingly partnering with schools and local school systems to develop learning experiences that will increase attendance and academic achievement. In addition, private foundations including The Wallace Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation are supporting research, advocacy efforts, and seeding the growth of statewide after-school networks to support the expansion of extended learning opportunities (Mott Foundation, 2004).

IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

SEAs play a critical role in preparing the nation's young people for their roles in the 21st century. The SEAs have primary responsibility for ensuring that all students in their state have access to high-quality education, strengthening and developing support systems for low-performing schools, and administering funding for federal programs such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the Supplemental Educational Services (SES) provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. As a result, they are well-positioned to provide decisive and visible leadership for the incorporation of ELOs into a sustained comprehensive strategy that aims to promote academic success for all students, engage students as contributing members of their schools and communities, promote positive social development, and reduce behaviors that put students' futures at risk.

We acknowledge that SEAs vary considerably in their statutory authority, capacity, and resources.

Yet, we believe SEAs can take the following important actions, where feasible and appropriate, to support the promotion, development, and sustainability of ELOs as part of a comprehensive, coordinated continuum of support in our nation's schools and communities, especially those serving low-income students and students from racial and ethnic minorities that are at greatest risk:

Reassess existing state policies through the critical lens of time and learning:

- Examine and reconsider state policies that might serve as potential barriers to increasing instructional time (e.g., funding, minimum number of school days).

- Create new or strengthen existing incentives to support districts in their efforts to implement extended time initiatives (e.g., full-day kindergarten, summer school).

- Support diverse and varied local approaches to expanding learning time and student engagement.

- Consider the role of technology in increasing student access to the general curriculum, and extending and expanding learning time.

Include extended learning opportunities as an explicit part of a broader school reform and improvement agenda:

- Identify ELOs—those taking place within and beyond the school day—as a state and local strategy for closing the achievement gap.

- Embed ELOs in the state's system of support to low-performing schools.

- Explicitly require that schools and districts with "needs improvement" status implement ELOs.

- Support diverse local efforts to extend and expand high-quality learning opportunities.

- Develop policies that ensure the integral linking of ELOs to the school day or year by addressing issues such as location, staffing, program content, and goals.

Support alignment, avoid duplication of efforts, and maximize supports to high-poverty, low-performing schools by integrating ELO initiatives into SEA policies and programs:

- Review SEA policies and procedures to ensure effective collaboration among 21st CCLC, Title I,

SES staff, and other staff who manage ELO initiatives.

- Reorganize the SEA to house the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, Title I, SES, and other student support programs in the same department or division.

- Ensure that a system for sharing information across programs and divisions is in place.

- Ensure data collection processes meet the needs of all student support programs.

Develop standards that set high expectations for all programs, including extended learning opportunities:

- Foster continuous improvement by setting high standards.

- Align standards to general education goals (i.e., the agency's vision for all students).

- Make standards a key part of a larger system that aims for program excellence—a system that includes high-quality professional development, training, technical assistance, and evaluation.

- Include a core set of criteria related to extended learning opportunities (i.e., program management and administration; program content; relationships among students, staff, and parents; physical environment; and safety, health, and nutrition).

- Ensure standards are comprehensive and broad enough to be relevant to the widest range of programs and approaches.

- Establish policies that ensure program leadership is conversant with program standards and capable of incorporating them into practice within the program setting.

Support diverse ELO initiatives that include a range of program content and opportunities for student choice:

- Program structure, content, and goals should be based on an assessment of student, parent, school, and community needs; one size does not fit all.

- Programs should be multi-faceted and comprehensive with diverse offerings, such as assistance with homework, tutoring, academic enrichment, physical education, recreation, and arts.

- Curricula and activities should be fun, experiential, and hands-on to effectively engage students in learning.

- Although school-day teachers might staff the program, state policies should ensure that instructional strategies differ from those offered during the regular school day.

- Program content should offer an appropriate balance between students' needs (e.g., assistance with homework, academic support) and students' wants (e.g., games, computer clubs).

- Staffing policies should specify skills, abilities, and competencies required to deliver program components effectively.

Encourage regular, prolonged student participation in ELO programs:

- Include student recruitment and retention strategies in the program planning process.

- Include levels of participation in evaluation data.

- Support mandatory attendance policies where feasible and appropriate.

- Encourage districts to establish attendance guidelines and policies.

- Support the use of incentives to encourage student attendance and participation.

Create and sustain an aligned system of professional development and technical assistance for extended learning program staff:

- Align professional development and technical assistance to program standards, goals, and expected outcomes.

- Relate professional development and technical assistance specifically to core competencies, skills, and abilities expected of extended-learning program staff.

- Partner with other organizations and agencies to increase the state's capacity to provide effective professional development and technical assistance.

- Offer professional development and technical assistance at regular intervals.

- Target professional development and technical assistance content to address areas identified by evaluation as weak or needing improvement.

- Consider creating an integrated system of professional development focused on academic/core content areas that serves both school-day and extended-learning program staff.

Develop a strong monitoring and evaluation system to document outcomes and foster continuous improvement:

- Standardize data collection across all programs.

- Disaggregate data by subgroups (e.g., attendance level, age, grade level).

- Devise data collection based on program standards, goals, and expected outcomes.

- Use evaluation data to refine state policy, guide professional development for program staff, and inform technical assistance to improve extended-learning programming.

- Offer training on data collection to program leadership.

Clearly articulate and differentiate between long-term and short-term academic program outcomes:

- Invest in program evaluation based on a research-based theory of program impact.

- Use the research base to develop program goals as part of state policy.

- Align program goals with activities and expected long- and short-term outcomes and gather data based on those expected outcomes.

- Incorporate short- and long-term indicators into program evaluations.

- Be realistic about what can be accomplished. Research suggests an immediate impact on test scores might not be realistic. Programs might have a short-term impact on homework completion rates, program and school-day attendance, in-class grades, and school connectedness—factors that some researchers suggest are intermediary outcomes leading to long-term outcomes such as increases in test scores.

Target state funds by prioritizing funding based on school improvement status, Title I eligibility, and concentrations of poverty:

- Providing ELOs to academically at-risk students attending schools that are not

meeting state standards or making adequate yearly progress should be funding priorities for scarce resources.

Secure sustainable funding:

- ◆ Aim to embed ELOs within mainstream education as a key support for enabling all children to succeed in school, work, and life.

- ◆ Propose that ELOs be available to all who want or need them and work to secure either new or existing funds to support their implementation.

- ◆ Support the establishment of a dedicated line item for state-administered extended learning programs.

- ◆ Tap existing federal and state funding streams such as Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Title I, and Title V–Innovative Programs.

Partner with other state agencies and organizations to expand the quality and availability of extended learning opportunities:

- ◆ Create time and space for collaborative planning.

- ◆ Partner with state childcare, juvenile justice, and social service agencies to increase state capacity, expand programming, avoid duplication of efforts, and align programming, especially when serving the same student populations.

- ◆ Align shared program goals, such as academic support and enrichment, prevention, and safety, with funding sources across agencies or organizations.

- ◆ Implement shared planning, administration, and accountability processes.

CONCLUSION

Promoting high educational attainment for every child is one of our nation's highest priorities. Yet many students, particularly low-income and minority students, continue to fall behind. Providing ELOs is a critical strategy for diminishing this achievement gap. Students most at-risk for academic failure, most often those attending low-performing schools and residing in low-income communities, have the most to gain because they are often the farthest behind and most likely to stay behind without opportunities for additional learning and personal and social development. Extending and expanding the opportunities for learning within the school day and during out-of-school hours should be part of a comprehensive strategy to ensure that every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income, has access to a high-quality education.

CCSSO will fulfill its commitment to promoting the academic achievement of all children by supporting states' efforts to implement, sustain, and expand extended learning opportunities as part of a comprehensive school reform strategy. We will continue to conduct research to identify best practices at state and local levels; provide technical assistance to state administrators of federally funded programs, support emerging statewide ELO networks, and work to increase awareness at all levels of the potential of ELOs as a means of ensuring equal access for all students.

For more information about the Council of Chief State School Officers, please visit www.ccsso.org

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