

## **Innovative Approaches to School Time**

Testimony from Dr. Sheila Hyde, Deputy Secretary, New Mexico Public Education Department

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of my testimony is to provide a State Perspective on the benefits of innovative approaches to school time, the expectations for implementation of these approaches, and some of the promising practices being implemented in New Mexico. First, the key element of high-performing schools seems to be “time”. Studies show that both expanded time and the particular ways it is deployed and managed are drivers in creating effective schools. The correlation between the amount of actual time students spend learning and how much they learn is very high. In fact, a longitudinal study at Duke University concluded that, on average, all students lose about month of progress in math skills each summer, while low-income students lose three months in reading comprehension. Since A Nation at Risk report in 1983 launched the standards-reform movement, more time in core academics is the only one of the five key recommendations that has not been implemented on a broad scale. Our “time” has come in New Mexico to tackle that critical element.

### **Benefits to New Mexico Students**

Expanded learning time devoted to core academic outcomes, enrichment activities, and for teachers to collaborate and plan will increase student achievement and improve graduation rates. It is an investment with the potential for high yields in New Mexico—a better workforce, reduced crime, stronger communities, healthier families, and renewed respect for a diverse culture.

### **Guiding Principles for Implementation**

1. Schools commit to examine their data, the current way the schools use time, and focus on improving the quality of instruction for all content areas in order to meet their students’ learning goals.
2. Schools increase the amount of time for teaching core subjects and align their curriculum to better deliver instruction.
3. Schools increase the enrichment opportunities that align to state standards and that engage students in their own learning styles and career path.
4. Schools re-design their schedules to build professional learning communities for their teachers, after school providers, and administrators in order to improve instructional practices and results.

5. Districts invest in providing time for the principal to be an effective instructional leader.
6. The community unites around the extended learning time strategies and works with the school to leverage resources, both human and fiscal.
7. Student progress is tracked using multiple measures and all extended time learning partners have access to the individual student data (teachers, parents, after school providers, principals, district staff, board members, etc.).

## **Promising Practices in New Mexico**

**Legislation.** In 2009, New Mexico passed HB 691 which requires a minimum of 180 full instructional days for a five day school week, exclusive of any release time for in-service training. Because of budget shortfalls, the date for implementing this law has been delayed until it can be funded.

**Extended days.** Many of our schools have added 1-2 hours a day to their school day. For example, De Vargas Middle School in Santa Fe Public Schools added 2 hours each day and are partnering with Citizen Schools to deliver services.

**Year Round Schools.** Some of our schools have adopted a year-round school schedule. For example, Lybrook Elementary School in Jemez Mountain Public Schools has a year round schedule to help with the “summer slide”.

## **ARRA Title I School Improvement Grant 2010 Reforms in Approved Schools**

- Additional days of instruction for all students
- Extended core program with additional minutes for intervention in Reading and/or Math
- Extended learning time that provides project based learning needed to develop background knowledge and expose students to activities beyond their rural isolation
- After-school program that focuses on academic tutoring
- Early start (two weeks) for all incoming Kindergarteners
- Jump start of three days for all incoming 9th graders
- Extended summer programs and extended day programs, aligned with the core curriculum
- Specialized teams that provide intense individualized instruction for students identified as needing intervention in reading and/or math
- Extended learning opportunities through homework help, Distance Learning opportunities, Saturday School, and Credit Recovery programs

- Common planning time to allow staff to monitor student academic progress toward standards and time to modify instruction and assessment to improve student outcomes
- Transportation for students to attend extended learning opportunities (Saturday school, summer programs, etc.)
- Parent Center and Teen Center to support Social Emotional Supports to enhance academic achievement

## **Conclusion**

The New Mexico Public Education Department is committed to providing leadership, technical assistance, program evaluation, established priorities for funding opportunities, and advocacy to integrate expanded learning time strategies in our reform agenda.