



Providing A 21st Century Education

Extending The School Day And School Year Will Help Close The Achievement Gap And Prepare New Jersey Students To Compete In A 21st Century Economy

"Our school calendar is antiquated both educationally and culturally. Life in 2014 demands something more for our students. It is time to lengthen both the school day and school year in New Jersey. If student achievement is lagging at the exact moment when we need improvement more than ever in order to compete in the world economy, we should take these steps - every possible step - to boost student achievement. And one key step is to lengthen the school day and the school year. So, working with Commissioner Cerf, I will present to you shortly a proposal to increase the length of both the school day and the school year in New Jersey. This is a key step to improve student outcomes and boost our competitiveness. We should do it now"

– Governor Chris Christie, State Of The State Address, January 14, 2014

A 21st Century Education For A 21st Century Economy:

The current academic calendar is an antiquated standard, effectively unchanged for more than a century and reflecting the workforce needs on an agrarian and industrial economy. As New Jersey and the nation work to educate a 21st century workforce, it is critical that our students are capable of competing in a globalized economy. Cities and states across the nation are increasingly experimenting with extending their average school day and school year.

- 5 states are currently participating in a pilot program supported by the Obama Department of Education to study the effects of a lengthened school year. (Julie Carr Smyth, "Will Longer School Year Help Or Hurt Us Students?" [The Associated Press](#), 1/13/13)
 - The states are Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and Tennessee.
 - The three-year pilot project will affect approximately 20,000 students in 40 schools.
- Under Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago's public schools extended the school day from 5 hours and 45 minutes to 7 hours last year despite stiff opposition by union leadership.
- San Diego implemented a year-round school calendar as early as 1970 and currently offers both year-round and traditional school year tracks.

Obama Secretary Of Education Arne Duncan: *"Whether educators have more time to enrich instruction or students have more time to learn how to play an instrument and write computer code, adding meaningful in-school hours is a critical investment that better prepares children to be successful in the 21st century."* (Julie Carr Smyth, "Will Longer School Year Help Or Hurt Us Students?" [The Associated Press](#), 1/13/13)

Longer School Days Will Help Provide Greater Educational Opportunities:

Governor Christie is firmly committed to providing every New Jersey student with a high-quality education, regardless of zip code. A critical component of delivering on that commitment is ensuring that low-income and at-risk youth have access to the type of focused attention and expansive opportunities other students enjoy. Extending the average school day will allow New Jersey schools the opportunity to provide:

- More immersive instruction through longer learning blocks in subject areas critical for college and workforce readiness.

- A greater emphasis of individualized learning tailored to fit the individual need of each child as well as focused assistance for students at risk of falling behind.
- Additional access, particularly for low-income families, to enriching educational opportunities that supplement the standard curriculum of courses.
- A safe environment to help keep at-risk youth off the streets for longer periods of time while encouraging their participation in enriching academic and social activities.

Geoffrey Canada, President And Chief Executive Officer Of The Harlem Children's Zone: "Without additional time, it is virtually impossible for students behind grade level -- particularly poor and minority students -- to catch up. An extended school day gives administrators the ability to ensure children get a well-rounded education. ... Extending the school day would also help families. In two-parent households, women have increasingly entered the workplace, and in single-parent households, there is even more of a need for the adults to work. That means parents do not fully control their own schedule and have to scramble to find high-quality after-school options." ("Help for Parents and Society," The New York Times' [Room For Debate Blog](#), 1/4/13)

A Longer School Year Can Help Close The Achievement Gap:

Studies have consistently shown that an extended summer break results in students losing ground academically as they are disengaged from the learning process. This is increasingly true for lower-income students who lack access to the same educational and enrichment opportunities as their higher-income peers. The result is that summer break contributes to the achievement gap between the children of high and low-income families.

- **A 2007 Study From Johns Hopkins University Suggested The "Achievement Gap At 9th Grade Mainly Traces To Differential Summer Learning Over The Elementary Years.** These early out-of-school summer learning differences, in turn, substantially account for achievement-related differences by family SES in high school track placements (college preparatory or not), high school noncompletion, and four-year college attendance. We discuss implications for understanding the bases of educational stratification, as well as educational policy and practice." (Karl L. Alexander, et al, "Lasting Consequences Of The Summer Learning Gap," American Sociological Review, 2007, Vol. 72, April:167-180)