



CITIZEN SCHOOLS

A New American Era of Service & Citizenship in Education: More Talent, More Time, and More Real-World Learning for our Nation's Children

*A memo on education and service from Citizen Schools to
President-Elect Obama and the Obama-Biden transition team*

Executive Summary

Throughout his campaign, President-elect Obama was a strong advocate for education as the critical pathway to realizing the promise of the American Dream, and to stimulating long-term economic growth. He also made a bold call to service and citizenship – calling on the public to get off of the sidelines and become active participants in our elections, our communities, our country, and our world.

Citizen Schools encourages President-elect Obama to marry these two themes and adopt as a core message of his first year in office a call to service that centers on an investment in our nation's human capital. This call to service and engagement can embrace several themes called for in the campaign, and include:

- A call to parents to turn off the TV, put away video games, and help their children do their homework and learn to read;
- A call to a new generation of excellent teachers, both recent college graduates such as those who enroll in Teach For America and older Americans, including military veterans, scientists, and engineers, who can bring their expertise into the nation's classrooms;
- A call to college students, young professionals, and baby boomers alike to serve as tutors, mentors, and volunteer "Citizen Teachers" by the millions, coaching high-risk kids to success through proven models;
- A call to hundreds of thousands of national service participants to expand learning through year-long Teaching Fellowships in pre-school, after-school, and Expanded Learning Time programs in our neediest school districts.

We believe President-elect Obama can usher in A New American Era of Service & Citizenship in Education that can channel the extraordinary civic energy created by the Obama campaign into a "Man on the Moon" campaign for educational and economic opportunity.

A new campaign for educational opportunity must increase learning time, make learning more relevant, and involve American citizens in the shared enterprise of education. Only by critically rethinking and boldly re-imagining the basic structures of education, can we lift an intolerably low national high school graduation rate, and develop a workforce that is prepared to meet the challenges of the global age. Put another way, we must stop treating time and classroom structure as fixed and immutable; if we continue to do so, achievement will continue to be variable. For achievement to be consistently high, learning time and classroom structure need to vary. Most importantly, we need to attract more talent to education -- "game-changers" who



can serve as full-time teachers, as Teaching Fellows who bridge the school day and afterschool learning hours, and as part-time tutors, mentors, and “Citizen Teachers.”

At Citizen Schools, we have seen that children can accomplish great things when they have more time to learn, more caring adults in their lives, and more “hands on” learning that engages and excites them about their futures. Moreover, our belief is affirmed by a decade of evidence and experience. Disadvantaged students in our programs have graduated from high school and advanced to college at rates that dramatically exceed the norm for their districts. They enter Citizen Schools with test scores, attendance rates, and academic performance that are below average for their urban districts, and, after graduating from Citizen Schools, they outperform their peers significantly on each of these measures. Our experience is part of a growing body of evidence showing significant positive outcomes for participants in other high-quality Expanded Learning Time programs such as College Track, the Higher Achievement Program, BELL, Experience Corps, and the Breakthrough Collaborative.

We recommend that the President-elect and the new Congress take the following actions to call Americans to service and restore education as an engine of opportunity:

- ***TALENT. Engage More Caring Adults in Providing More Relevant Learning:***
 - Work with Congress to enact The Serve America Act to call millions of Americans to service, many of them in the nation’s classrooms.
 - Specifically seek to engage scientists, engineers, and professionals who use math in their jobs to serve as “Citizen Teachers” in schools and Expanded Learning Time programs, augmenting the work of full-time teachers and bringing real-world learning projects into the learning day.
 - Work with Congress to enact the Teaching Fellows for Expanded Learning and After School Act introduced in the 110th Congress.

- ***TIME. Create More Time for Learning:***
 - Work with Congress to enact Expanded Learning Time (ELT) legislation as introduced in the Senate in the 110th Congress.
 - Expand and improve the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, including legislation to expand high-quality afterschool programs at the middle and high school levels.
 - Invest in high school readiness and the middle school to high school transition by passing Success in the Middle Act, introduced by the President-elect while he served in the Senate.

- ***GROW WHAT WORKS. Provide growth capital for education reforms that work:***
 - Ensure passage and full funding of the proposed Serve America Act “Community Solutions Fund” that would provide matching grants to venture philanthropies seeking to grow evidence-based programs.
 - Create a fund to support education entrepreneurs who have demonstrated success and have the capacity and desire to take their operations to a national scale. This fund would be overseen by a new Department of Education Office of Education Entrepreneurship and Innovation.



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Additional Context and Detail on Legislative Recommendations

Our nation's education reform agenda needs an update. A push for higher standards and more frequent measurement over the past decade has begun to lift basic math and reading scores for younger students. The best charter schools have produced growing beachheads of excellence, while raising important questions about the proper structure and schedule for great schools. Alternative paths to teaching and school leadership have infused many schools with fresh talent and in some cases have led to tangible gains in student performance.

However, the last decade has also confirmed and clarified the shortcomings of our education system. High school drop-out rates remain unacceptably high and the achievement gap for low-income students remains too wide. Many students are woefully unprepared for the future, leaving significant workforce challenges for the American economy. Even though we are making modest gains in building the basic skills of our students, other countries are making bigger and faster gains. American high school students score at the middle of the pack or lower among their peers in other industrialized countries in math, science, and thinking skills. The United States stands at 16th in the world in the proportion of our 25 year olds who have earned a college degree.

We applaud President-elect Obama's focus on service as a strategy to improve education, his commitment to further fund and improve afterschool programs, and his focus on middle school as a key point of intervention for children at high risk of dropping out of high school or limping across the finish line with inadequate skills. We also support his call for more charter schools, more pathways into teaching and better pay for our best teachers.

High-quality after-school and expanded learning time programs provide more time, more enrichment, and more qualified educators for America's children. Children spend only 20 percent of their waking hours in school, yet we expect schools to shoulder almost all of the responsibility for educating them and preparing them for their futures. A child's capacity to learn doesn't end with the final bell – and our 19th century school calendar does not meet the educational demands of our 21st century economy. Afterschool and expanded learning programs provide the additional time needed to advance school success, and the ability to provide complementary learning opportunities outside school.

Additionally, all students leaving high school, whether they are going directly into the workforce, military or other national service, or to college, require a new set of 21st century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and problem solving abilities.

As we expect more from our students and teachers, we must provide them with the time and human and capital resources they need to succeed. As part of a reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind, or as a separate effort to update our education policies with long-term impact, the new Administration should:

- **Work with Congress to Enact Expanded Learning Time Legislation:** Legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate in the 110th Congress that would



provide opportunities to expand the learning day. As a starting point, we prefer the Senate version of the legislation (The Time for Innovation Matters in Education Act, S. 3431), sponsored by Senator Kennedy (D-MA), which would:

- Authorize grants to state and local education agencies on a competitive basis to fund expanded learning time initiatives in schools. This funding would give schools the opportunity to comprehensively redesign and expand their schedule—ultimately increasing learning time for students by at least 30 percent.
- Promote partnerships between schools and afterschool programs in carrying out expanded learning models to encourage broader learning opportunities that connect directly to school day learning. The legislation gives priority to models that incorporate effective afterschool programs or community-based organizations in all aspects of planning and implementation.
- Allow for direct applications to the Secretary of Education by nonprofit education reform organizations working with schools to expand the learning day across one or more school districts and one or more states.

We further recommend that the legislation when reintroduced be amended to allow up to 20 percent of funds (instead of 10 percent) be available for direct application by education-reform organizations to run ELT programs in partnership with multiple schools across one or more districts and one or more states.

- **Strengthen 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Grow Innovative Programs that Achieve Results:** The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to afterschool programs. While the No Child Left Behind Act authorizes the program to be funded at \$2.5 billion, current spending is approximately \$1 billion. Numerous studies have shown that quality afterschool programs increase students' academic performance while providing much needed supervision in the out-of-school hours. Yet some afterschool programs, including many run directly by school districts, do not meet quality standards and do not significantly influence student outcomes. The need for quality afterschool far outpaces the supply, and funding levels do not come close to meeting the demand. According to the Afterschool Alliance, there are 15.3 million children in the United States whose parents would send them to an afterschool program if one were available, and, in 2006, a mere 26 percent of the organizations that applied for 21st CCLC grants received funding.

In order to meet the tremendous demand for afterschool programming, we propose that President-elect Obama fulfill his campaign pledge to double funding for afterschool programs (from \$1 billion to \$2 billion); but we recommend that additional funding be targeted towards high-performing, high-quality programs with proven results in increasing academic and other outcomes for participants. We further recommend that 25 percent of this increase (\$250 million) be targeted towards high-quality demonstration programs at the middle school and high school level, such as those outlined in:

- **The After School Partnerships Improve Results in Education Act**, introduced in the 110th Congress (ASPIRE Act, H.R. 6928) would fund after-school programs for middle and high school students to improve academic achievement, lower high school dropout rates, and spur interest in high-demand careers. If enacted, ASPIRE would support after-school programs that give young people the



opportunity to explore a variety of careers and gain exposure to career technical programs before they graduate from high school. The ASPIRE Act aims to spark students' interest in technology jobs and other growing industries by encouraging local partnerships between after-school programs and trade, technical, and business organizations. The Aspire Act also encourages scaling up of effective and proven programs.

- The 21st Century Learning Center program can also be improved by allowing and strongly encouraging states to allow high-quality programs to re-apply for funding after their initial funding period; states should also be encouraged to accept multi-site applications from nonprofit providers of high-quality programming in partnership with schools. Further, the federal Department of Education should consider reserving a certain portion of funds to allow for multi-state applications from high-quality nonprofit providers.

- **Invest in High School Readiness:** In the 110th Congress as Senator, the President-elect introduced the Success in the Middle Act (S. 2227). The bill and its House companion (H.R. 3406) seek to improve low-performing middle schools, and include such crucial student supports as expanded learning time, personal graduation plans, and coaching that enable all students to stay on the path to graduation.

We applaud this initiative. Consistent with our thoughts on expanding time for learning and opening schools to alternative structures that get results, we propose an addition to the Success in the Middle Act that would focus on the middle school to high school transition and on creating a strong college-going culture through college visitation, high school choice, career awareness, and college prep programs – including those using extra learning time – during the middle school years. Ninth grade is too late to start drop-out prevention programs. Children need to get excited by the idea of going to college and see the links between school, college and career while still in middle school. Students need help choosing and preparing for success in college-track high schools and college-track courses. Toward this end, we recommend that schools and school districts funded through the Success in the Middle Act be encouraged to work with and financially support proven partners that can provide the extra time and extra support to get middle school students on a pathway to success.

In addition to more time for learning, we know that children need more caring adults in their lives. Children will benefit most if those adults come from a wide range of careers and backgrounds. Programs like Citizen Schools bring the community into the classroom by recruiting, training and supporting volunteers to teach what they know and love. Volunteers bring the credibility and authenticity that students crave. They engage children and show them the real world applications of what they are learning in school, with exciting experiences that tie directly to their academic skills, educational paths and career opportunities. Our country needs to create more opportunities for ordinary citizens to get involved in their communities in innovative ways, to help prepare our children for the future.

In its first 100 days, as part of comprehensive national service reauthorization, or as a separate effort to call more Americans to service and support innovative solutions that invest in our communities, the new Administration should:

- **Work with Congress to Enact The Serve America Act (S. 3487):** Introduced in the second session of the 110th Congress by Senators Kennedy and Hatch (R-UT) and co-sponsored by a host of Senators from both sides of the aisle, including the President-elect, the Serve America Act is a major legislative initiative to expand service opportunities,



recruiting Americans of all ages to address some of the nation's most urgent challenges, including education. The legislation also invests in promoting innovative solutions to our nation's problems. The Serve America Act would:

- *Build on the success of AmeriCorps to create a new, more robust Corps focused on areas of national need.* It asks 175,000 more Americans to give a year of service to solve specific challenges, thereby expanding the number of national service participants to 250,000.
- *Mobilize community members to work together to close the educational achievement gap.* The legislation would establish an Education Corps of instructors, mentors, and tutors who will work within expanded learning time initiatives and afterschool programs to increase student engagement and academic success.
- *Create opportunities to mobilize and manage even more volunteers.* The legislation would expand the volunteer pool by establishing a "Volunteer Generation Fund" to help nonprofit organizations recruit and manage more volunteers, significantly increasing the opportunities for more and more Americans to serve.
- **Explore ways to promote an infusion of professionals volunteering their time to bring hands on learning back into our schools.** Our program's volunteers – we call them Citizen Teachers – come from myriad professions and from all walks and stages of life. They share what they know and love in apprenticeship courses that bring learning alive. The new Administration should build upon the volunteer mobilization provisions of the Serve America Act and prioritize citizen service efforts that offer Americans high-quality opportunities to volunteer in our schools and afterschool programs to teach, mentor, and reinvigorate civic life. In particular, the nation should recruit scientists, artists and other professionals who could augment the learning day and bring specialized expertise and enhanced 21st century skills into the classroom.

Additionally, to bring more caring adults into the lives of children and assist schools in providing all that children need, quality afterschool and expanded learning time programs will depend on a talented and well-equipped workforce. Across the country, too many communities lack the resources needed to recruit, train, and support a committed "second shift" of instructors and mentors to work with students in some of our nation's neediest schools.

- **Work with Congress to Enact the 'Teaching Fellows for Expanded Learning and Afterschool Act' (S. 778):** Introduced in the 110th Congress by Senators Kennedy and Burr (R-NC), this bi-partisan legislation would:
 - Recruit exemplary recent graduates of two- and four-year colleges to contribute to an expanded learning time initiative, 21st Century Community Learning Center, or other high-performing afterschool program. Teaching Fellows would be responsible for advancing student engagement and achievement in high-need schools through activities such as tutoring, mentoring, small group instruction, and service-learning.
 - Prepare Fellows for two years of full-time service through training by experienced community-based afterschool and expanded-day programs. It



would also enable Fellows to access institutions of higher education and pursue degrees in public education and youth development.

- Give priority to programs that engage community mentors and volunteers and have demonstrated their effectiveness as afterschool or expanded learning initiatives. The most suitable programs have a track record of improving students' academic performance, character, and professional skills. Further, they offer skill development through real-world experiences and hand-on projects.

GROW WHAT WORKS. Provide growth capital for education reforms that work:

- **Ensure passage and full funding of the proposed Serve America Act (S. 3487) "Community Solutions Fund" that would provide matching grants to venture philanthropies seeking to grow evidence-based programs.**
 - ***Support innovation in the nonprofit sector.*** Social entrepreneurs, who have launched nonprofit organizations such as Citizen Schools, are experimenting with new solutions to our nation's most pressing problems. This legislation would establish a commission to study and improve collaboration between the federal government, nonprofit sector, and private sector to meet national challenges more effectively. It also creates a network of "Community Solution Funds" to allow innovative nonprofits to replicate and expand initiatives that have successfully addressed community challenges.
- **Create a Grow What Works Fund to invest in educational entrepreneurs who have demonstrated success and have the capacity and desire to take their operations to a national scale.** As proposed by Sara Mead and Andrew J. Rotherham in a recent paper for the Brookings Institution, growing to \$300 million, a Grow What Works Fund would be overseen by a new Office of Education Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Department of Education. This federal investment, and the private dollars it could leverage from venture philanthropists and foundations, would address the access to capital that limits the growth of many education entrepreneurs. The fund would also invest in human capital and out of school time supports.

Investing in the American Dream

As the new Administration takes on the many challenges facing our nation, we know that making the investment in children is the single most important thing we can do to ensure the future health of our economy and our country. In addition to the agenda outlined above, Citizen Schools supports a range of investments in American children and their families, including the array of supports to assist low-income families in making sure our children are ready to learn. We know that a high-quality education increases future earnings, strengthens civic bonds, and is essential to prepare a well-trained workforce for a global economy.

Too much of our current education system is an artifact of an earlier age. We need to re-think and re-imagine education for *our* century. We need to mobilize the untapped resources of time and talent that can help us restore the historic promise of education and opportunity for all Americans. We appreciate the President-elect's commitment to these important issues and we look forward to working with him and his Administration as he takes office.



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Citizen Schools operates a national network of apprenticeship programs for middle school students, connecting adult volunteers to young people in hands-on learning projects after school. At Citizen Schools, students develop the academic and leadership skills they need to do well in school, get into college, and become leaders in their careers and in their communities.

At Citizen Schools we have been working with disadvantaged students since 1995, and now partner with middle schools in 20 school districts across seven diverse states. We develop outstanding Expanded Learning Time opportunities and mobilize a “second shift” of dynamic educators to lift student achievement and inspire a love of learning. Internal and external evaluations have shown that Citizen Schools graduates out-perform their peers while enrolled in the program in middle school, accelerate their gains relative to peers when in high school, and complete high school and enroll in college at significantly higher rates than the norms for their district.

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