The continuing call for high standards and real accountability is only going to increase the pressure on school districts to think hard about keeping their schools open later and longer. Given the demand to raise standards, to give teachers more time to plan, and the need to help many more children catch up on their learning, one thing is certain—the time constraints we currently live with have got to give way to something new and different.”

Richard W. Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education
April 22, 2001
Recommendations

We urge Congress to provide $900 million a year, starting in Fiscal Year 2003, for schools that reorganize the traditional school calendar year to:

• Shift to a school calendar with no more than an eight-week summer break and redistribute the vacation time in shorter recesses between academic terms that can be used for enrichment opportunities, remediation and professional development and/or
• Lengthen their school year to include at least 200 days.

The initial grant should be $180 per pupil for schools that have 70 percent or more of Title I student enrollment, $120 per pupil for schools that have between 30 percent and 70 percent of Title I student enrollment and $60 per pupil for schools that have less than 30 percent Title I enrollment.

We urge legislative bodies in all states to:

• Match the federal grants or at least provide other mechanisms of encouragement for modernizing the school calendar year.
• Work toward the creation of a full-time (11-month) professional body of teachers.

We urge that parents, students, businesses and community leaders be involved early and continuously in studies and conversations about restructuring the school year. School boards, school administrators and teacher organizations should begin considering reforms in the calendar year and, where improvement is being considered, to undertake together careful planning and discussions. During the planning process, schools should identify their program goals and develop plans for ongoing data collection and annual reports of progress in achieving those goals.

If the school year is lengthened, time should be set aside for quality professional development as well as for additional instructional days.

We urge the public to understand that an improvement in the quality of educational opportunity may require increased investment in teacher salaries and air-conditioning. We believe most Americans are willing to invest a little more in order to give their children and future generations improved educational grounding.