



January 9, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senator Kennedy Visits Edwards Middle School

Massachusetts Initiative to Add Learning Time Seen as Model for the Nation

Boston – January 9, 2008 – Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Mayor Thomas M. Menino today visited the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School in Boston’s Charlestown neighborhood to celebrate the successes of the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time (ELT) Initiative – the first in the nation state initiative to redesign schools with substantially more time for learning – and to discuss a national expansion of the Initiative through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization. Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol R. Johnson welcomed the visitors alongside Edwards Principal Jeffrey Riley.

Senator Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate’s Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and his counterpart in the House, Rep. George Miller, will work to include a pilot to expand learning time in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization. The Senate is expected to address ESEA in the coming months. In addition, Rep. Donald M. Payne has introduced a bill to provide federal incentives for the planning and implementation of expanded learning initiatives nationwide.

“There are few more promising strategies for helping all children get ahead in today’s global economy than expanding learning time,” Senator Kennedy said. “It gives students the time not only to master the basics, but also to expand their horizons through art, music, physical education and other activities. It gives teachers additional time for collaboration and planning to improve instruction. The early results of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative here in Massachusetts are impressive and show real promise in preparing all children for a lifetime of success. I believe what we’re doing with expanded learning here in Massachusetts is a model for the nation.”

Senator Kennedy recently secured \$175,000 in federal funding for Massachusetts 2020, the non-profit organization assisting schools in the design and implementation of the Expanded Learning

Time Initiative. The grant will directly support technical assistance to ELT schools and districts throughout Massachusetts.

“After only one year, the Expanded Learning Time Initiative is yielding promising results in student academic performance,” said Chris Gabrieli, Chairman of Massachusetts 2020. “The ELT Initiative is growing rapidly in Massachusetts, and it is poised to become a model for national replication. Massachusetts 2020 is grateful for the support of Senator Kennedy, the Governor and Legislative leadership, local leaders like Mayor Menino, and all those who are making great strides toward improving education for our children.”

The Clarence R. Edwards Middle School implemented the ELT Initiative in September 2006. The redesigned school day allows more time for innovative academics and includes a wide range of enrichment activities, from which students may choose. As a result of ELT, the academic gains at the Edwards School have been impressive. Once an underperforming school by state standards, the Edwards School is now one of the higher performing middle schools in Boston.

In addition to regular math classes, students at the Edwards School now participate in Math Leagues, a competitive and socially engaging way to learn and practice math. As a result, math scores rose across all grades. The Edwards School increased the percentage of students scoring proficient on the math MCAS at more than twice the rate of the district and also of the state.

The Edwards is one of four Boston Public Schools to implement the ELT Initiative. The other three schools – the Mario Umana Middle School Academy in East Boston, the James P. Timility Middle School in Roxbury, and the Boston Arts Academy in the Fenway – are experiencing similar results.

“Boston is committed to expanding and strengthening learning opportunities available to our children,” said Mayor Thomas M. Menino. “The Boston School Committee, Superintendent Johnson and I see Expanded Learning Time as a key part of a strategy to ensure that children receive a well-rounded education that not only prepares them for success in college and the workforce, but for a healthy, fulfilled life.”

The implementation of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative is the result of a unique public-private partnership between Massachusetts 2020 and the Massachusetts Department of Education. The ELT Initiative now includes 18 schools, with more than 9,000 students. More than 75 schools are currently developing plans to implement ELT over the next two years.

For more information about Expanded Learning Time, please visit: www.mass2020.org.

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