Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative School District
School Administrative Unit #63

192 Forest Road Lyndeborough, NH 03082
603-654-8088

Bryan K. Lane
Superintendent of Schools

Betty Moore, M.Ed.
Director of Student Support Services

Lise Tucker
Business Administrator

TO: The WLC Strategic Planning Committee
FROM: Bryan Lane
DATE: 7/5/18
RE: Staffing Structure

When looking at the long term needs of the district, the average daily membership (ADM) will be the determinant factor in deciding in the direction that should be followed.

If the district were to maintain an enrollment between 500 and 600 students, 15 students in the pre-school, that would create an average of students in grades K-12 as follows:

Kindergarten to Grade 2	38-46 students	3 classes averaging 13 to 16 students
Grade 3 to Grade 5	38-46 students	2 classes averaging 19 to 23 students
Middle School	38-46 students	Determined by Strategic Planning Com.
High School	38-46 students	Continued current staffing

The only possible changes in teaching staff would occur at the middle school level.

Option 1- Maintain current structure

There have been multiple changes to the district's structure in the past two years. The addition of the Curriculum Coordinator has created a strong emphasis on professional development along with curriculum development and implementation. The RTI Coordinator at FRES has worked to create a support system which is affecting those students who in the past would not have had academic support. The MS/HS has made adjustments to their schedule which has the potential to create changes to the school environment in both academics and culture. Of the 27 teachers at WLC, 11 have been hired in the last two years with the possibility of four more retirements in the coming school year. The current structure at the MS/HS can support the changes being implemented and maintain the efforts being made to increase academic achievement. The board may want to consider waiting to make any changes in the administrative structure to determine the effectiveness of the changes that have been put into place in before making any change in administrative structure.

Option 2- Part Time Superintendent

As the district finds its' way to appropriate academic achievement levels, it would be possible to make the Superintendent's position 32 hours per week. Once the changes needed are in place, that would create a lessening of the work load for the Superintendent. A reduction of 20% in salary would net a savings to the district of approximately $23,000. **The change would be done for financial reasons.** The reason is a job responsibility one. With the addition of the Director of Technology and Curriculum Coordinator along with the improvements made in curriculum and instruction, there is not a need to have a full time Superintendent. The issue with this is finding someone who wanted to be part time and would give multiple years to the district. There are districts that do this now, but none with a high school. The district with part-time superintendents have low student enrollments and send their high school students to surrounding districts. There are no surrounding towns that could handle an influx of 170 high school students at this time. If there were not a solid administrative structure for curriculum, finance, and at the building level this is not an option that I would advise.

Option 3- Combined MS/HS Principal/Superintendent

Another option would be to have the WLC principal also serve as Superintendent. That would necessitate changing the department chair structure at WLC to accommodate teacher supervision and maintaining the position of assistant principal. I do not know of a current model for this position within the New Hampshire. The administrative structure could look like (changes are in bold print):

Superintendent/WLC Principal	**Full year contract**
Business Administrator	Full year contract
Curriculum Coordinator	Full year contract
Technology Director	Full year contract
FRES/LCS Principal	Full year contract
WLC Assistant Principal	Full year contract
Director of School Counseling	**Full year administrative contract**
English Department Chair	**200 day contract**
Math Department Chair	**200 day contract**
Science Department Chair	**200 day contract**
Social Studies Department Chair	**200 day contract**
Unified Arts Department Chair	**200 day contract****

****If course loads could be reduced so Department Chairs only taught 4 classes, the Unified Arts Department Chair may not be needed.**

The reason to do this would be to increase the supervision for teaching staff in an effort to create increased proficiency in assessment and instruction. All teacher evaluations would be done by the department chairs providing support for the curriculum that they specialize in. The change in administrative structure would allow this to happen within funds available at some savings. In this case, the Assistant Principal plays a very big role in making sure there is a level of continuity in the school community particularly in matters of student management. The Director of School Counseling currently works 215 days. The increase to full year contract would 229 days with 20 days paid vacation.

If this were the case, the salary for the Superintendent/Principal should be in the $130,000 to $140,000 range in order to accommodate for the increased level of duties for the single person. This would be a decrease in salary costs of about $80,000 for the combined salary of the Superintendent/Principal. The positions of department chair would become supervisory and starting salary could be $70,000. The increase to full year should increase an experienced Director of School Counseling to a full year contract and $80,000 if given supervisory responsibilities over the other school counselors and school nurses. The increases in salary would be offset by the $80,000 giving an estimated savings to the district of $30,000 to $50,000 depending on who is hired and if we hire from within.

Option 4- MS/HS with Area Directors, no department heads and an Assistant Principal.

The idea of area directors creates an increased level of supervision for teaching staff, a distribution of administrative duties and the ability to coordinate curriculum implementation at the building level. There are usually two area directors one for Humanities and one for Science and Technology. In our case supervision could look like this:

Humanities	**Science and Technology**
English Department	Science Department
Social Studies Department	Math Department
Foreign Language	Health/PE
Art	Family and Consumer Science
Music	Technology Education

Special Education would be supervised by both the Principal and the Director of Student Services. The two area directors would supervise 13 or 14 staff persons. The need for the assistant principal is still there in order to help with teacher evaluations, student management and student supervision. The area director would need to have a decreased teaching load, ideally to three classes per day in order to meet consistently with the staff being supervised. The disadvantage to this versus department heads is that the area director may not be certified in multiple areas. This could be done with area directors having 200 to 210 day contracts. The starting salary should be in the range of $70,000 to $75,000. The increased cost to the district would be between $15,000 and $30,000 which could be realized in combining the Superintendent with the MS/HS Principal. The department head structure would be more expensive if the district is looking at a more effective way of increasing student achievement through better curriculum and assessment implementation.

Option 5- MS/HS Department heads with no Assistant Principal

With this scenario the position of Assistant Principal would be eliminated and all other positions would remain the same. This would include the creation of four or five department heads to include:

English Department Chair	200 day contract
Math Department Chair	200 day contract
Science Department Chair	200 day contract
Social Studies Department Chair	200 day contract
Unified Arts Department Chair	200 day contract**

**If course loads could be reduced so Department Chairs only taught 4 classes, the Unified Arts Department Chair may not be needed.

The reason to do this would be increase supervision of instructional staff and better affecting curriculum implementation as well as student assessment. All teacher evaluations would be done by the department chairs providing support for the curriculum that they specialize in.

Administratively that means that having the Principal for LCS/FRES is appropriate with no assistant principal under educational rules from the DOE. If enrollment in grades Pre-K to 5 increased to over 300, an assistant principal would be warranted. Enrollment currently is at 220. The district may want to consider moving the school counselor into a 190-day contract with administrative responsibilities. This would include summer registrations, planning and professional development.

If a change is to be made, my recommendation for the most effective strategy, that would also be fiscally responsible, is to combine the positions of Superintendent and MS/HS Principal with Department Heads and Assistant principal. This option allows for a strong investment in curriculum and instruction and allows for a strong support system for the district. In considering this change it would be important to take into consideration the cultural change this would bring to the district as a whole as well as WLC. If this is the direction the board wished to go in, the timing of the change would be important so as not to undercut progress in positive morale and contracts that are already in place within the district. There are no examples of this concept within the State of New Hampshire that I am aware of.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

As it currently stands, our special education staffing with a full time district director is appropriate. The district has run between 20 and 25 % of our students identified with special needs. If the student population dropped below 500, that would not change the need for having the district wide position. Also in considering the staffing of special services we need not only to look at the severity of the disabilities the district is involved with and the number of out of district placements. If the population of students rose above 600, the district may need to consider reestablishing special education coordinators for the buildings depending on the percentage of special needs students and the severity of the disabilities involved.

SOCIAL WORKER

The only position that the district may want to consider adding is a social worker for the district. We have a good number of families that are in crisis on any given day. The issues from home are part of the schools daily atmosphere and we currently do not have a vehicle to do the outreach that would be most effective.

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TO: The WLC Strategic Planning Committee
FROM: Bryan Lane
DATE: 7/5/18
RE: School Calendar

The Strategic Planning Committee has been charged with looking into the school calendar and determining whether adding days is appropriate and what the length of the school day should be. The research cited below is included in this informational packet.

According to a study in 2007-08 by the National Center for Educational Statistics, the average school day in the United States is 6 hours and 38 minutes. In New Hampshire the average day is 6 hours and 24 minutes. The school day in our school district is 6 hours and 50 minutes. The average number of school days in the United States annually is 180 days, in New Hampshire 180 days as well.

The minimum number of hours of instruction according to the DOE (ED306.18) is:

(a) Pursuant to RSA 189:1 and RSA 189:24, each school district shall maintain a school year as provided below:

(1) The school district shall maintain in each elementary school, a school year of at least 945 hours of instructional time and in each kindergarten at least 450 hours of instructional time;

(2) The school district shall maintain in each middle and high school, a school year of at least 990 hours of instructional time. Districts shall provide at least 945 hours of instructional time for grades 7 and 8 in elementary schools that includes grades 7, or 8, or both;

(3) The instructional school day of an individual student shall not exceed 5.75 hours of instructional time in elementary schools and 6 hours of instructional time in middle and high schools;

Instructional time does not include lunch or transition time. Lunch at FRES is 30 minutes and there are transition times during the day. Lunch at WLC is 25 minutes and there are six 3 minute transitional periods.

There is research on both sides of the argument for longer school days and the needs of high school students are different from the needs of elementary school students.

- A longer day for elementary school students, particularly students in grades 1-3, does not correlate to more academic learning. Most elementary schools schedule a 90 minute daily block for reading and a 60 minute block for mathematics. Elementary students do not always have the academic stamina to extend these time periods. They can be supplemented through the day with activity/play based learning but lengthening the formal time for instruction is not a productive use of time. When our school district decreased the number of school days to 174

from 180, they effectively reduced reading instruction by 10 hours and mathematics by six hours.

- For high school students using varied blocks of time allows teachers to provide for activities that cannot be handled within the traditional 50-minute period.
- There is a great deal of research that indicates starting the high school day between 8AM and 8:30AM would be beneficial to students. Our MS/HS day begins at 7:50.
- There is always summer regression for students who are away from school. If we added the six days back into the school year, the regression could be minimized.

I have attached research around school hours.

Hypothetically if WLC ran a schedule with seven 50 minute periods (which creates a 12-minute reduction in instructional time daily) for 180 days which includes passing times and 25 minutes for lunch the instructional hours would meet the state requirements.

Minimum State Required Hours	990 hours of instruction for HS and MS 945 hours of instruction for element
Current hours of instruction @ WLC	1,035 hours of instruction
Current hours of instruction @ FRES	1,000 hours of instruction
Hours with reduction of 12 min. for 180 days @ WLC	1,035 hours of instruction
Hours with reduction of 12 min. for 180 days @ FRES	999 hours of instruction

In this scenario we could reduce the school day by 12 minutes per day. 12 minutes over 180 school days which is equal to 36 hours. The teachers, in this scenario, would be working eight hours more annually.

Comparing 174 days and 180 days as far as the teacher work day is concerned

	174 Days	180 Days with 12-minute reduction	
Number of minutes per day	440	428	
Number of days	174	180	
Total Minutes	76,560	77,040	
Hours	1,276	1,284	8-hour increase

In creating the calendar, we could designate that the district would make up the first five snow days as required by the state. In order to not extend the year too long, the sixth and eighth day could be non-make up days and we would still be within the hours required by the state.

If the day was started 12 minutes later at 8:00, that would be in-line with some research about later starting times for HS students

This would create an increased cost for para-educators. With the current staff the increased cost for 6 school days would be:

2019-20	$14,400
2020-21	$14,760

10 Longer School Days Pros and Cons

In the United States, many children find themselves falling behind on their benchmarks that are needed for basic scholastic achievement. Once a child falls behind their grade level, it can be difficult for them to catch back up. This is especially true for difficult subjects, such as mathematics or reading.

One of the solutions to this issue is to extend the length of the school day. This extension may be as little as 30 minutes, but some districts have implemented up to 2 additional hours of schooling every day.

The primary benefit of a longer school day is that it provides students with more time for learning. Teachers can provide more 1-on-1 time with each student in their classroom, allowing for specific weaknesses to be personally addressed. Trouble areas for each student can have education plans implemented to correct them, even if an IEP isn't mandated for that student. Even intensive tutoring could be implemented.

As for the disadvantage of a longer school day, quantity doesn't necessarily equate to quality. The fact that students are falling behind on their scholastic benchmarks is evidence that the current teaching structure, curriculum, and/or environment isn't working for that student. Instead of making a student endure an ineffective system for a longer period each day, a better solution would be to improve the quality contacts for those individual students.

Here are some additional pros and cons of a longer school day to consider and discuss as well.

What Are the Pros of a Longer School Day?

1. It matches the class schedule to a parent's work schedule.

In many US school districts, the first class begins 1-2 hours after most parents need to be at

work. The final class ends 1-2 hours before the work day ends for most parents. By extending the length of the school day, parents can potentially save some money on child care because their schedules will better match. If nothing else, household transportation costs can be reduced by synching up the schedules.

2. It provides additional learning time for other subjects.

In an era when school districts face tight budgets and limited resources, the creative subjects tend to be the first ones to go. Subjects like music, art, and physical education tend to be cut because they aren't tested in a standardized way. By having longer school days, it would be possible to add these subjects back into local curriculums so that students can benefit from a well-rounded education.

3. It could reduce the amount of homework sent home.

Many teachers send homework with their students at the end of the day or the week as a way to supplement the learning process. By extending the length of a school day, it would make it possible to reduce or eliminate the amount of homework that is sent to students. That lessens the burden on parents to be teachers at home, which can be difficult in an era when Common Core mathematics has proven to be difficult to understand.

4. Optional courses or recreational activities could be part of the school day.

Although a longer school day means less free time, certain components of school could be included as part of the day so that the loss is tempered. Sports practices could be part of the final period of the day. Certain recreational activities, such as swimming, could be included as part of the curriculum. By surveying what students want to learn outside of school, a district can create a comprehensive plan that still encourages passions to be pursued while educational opportunities are extended.

5. It could create longer family weekends.

Many employers offer their workers the option to work four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days, creating a three-day weekend for that employee. Schools which extend the length

of their contact time could do the same thing. That means the potential of creating longer family weekends, when schedules can be synced up, and that increases parent-child contact time.

What Are the Cons of a Longer School Day?

1. It limits student activities outside of school.

If children are spending more time in a classroom, then that means they're spending less free time outside of it. A longer school day means less time for students to get involved in programs like 4-H, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, or organized sports. Instead of pursuing something they are passionate about, like gymnastics or marital arts, students will be sitting at a table or desk, trying to retain information from textbooks while being told what they need to learn instead of learning what they're passionate about.

2. It results in fatigue.

Children who become tired are less likely to retain information provided to them. Fatigue in children can also create mood instabilities or enhance the symptoms of an attention deficit disorder diagnosis. It is not unusual for students to already experience this issue after lunch, so extending the school day would make it difficult for children to mentally prepare themselves for additional learning.

3. Scores don't rise with longer school days.

From data compiled in 2009 by the Seattle PI, students in the United States are already spending longer days in school compared to other nations. Compared to Singapore, US students are spending more than 200 additional hours in school each year. Even with these additional contact hours in place, student scores in the US have failed to rise to the levels seen in other nations.

4. It forces teachers to work longer hours too.

Teachers are already putting in a full day of work. Most teachers arrive an hour before school starts and leave 1-2 hours after school ends. Many teachers grade papers at home and perform other duties outside of the "normal" work day. Extending their contact time with students will extend their day and could make many of them be less effective at what they do.

5. More funding is required to make longer hours happen.

More contact hours for teachers means a higher salary needs to be paid. Another solution would be to hire additional teachers, but that would mean an added labor cost as well. That means higher property taxes and levies. It means private schools would raise their tuition rates. Considering the additional time doesn't seem to improve scores, a focus on quality would be a better solution – especially if the funding requirements are difficult to meet.

The pros and cons of a longer school day will always be a controversial debate. More contact time can mean greater learning opportunities, but it could also create discipline issues for tired children without seeing any gains in scores. By focusing on quality first, then quantity, US children may have a better chance to reach their benchmarks and strive for future success.

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Launching young readers!
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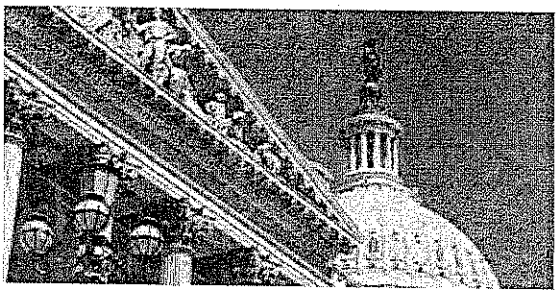
Time to Learn: Benefits of a Longer School Day

By: Christopher Gabrieli , Warren Goldstein



In this excerpt from the book *Time to Learn: How a New School Schedule Is Making Smarter Kids, Happier Parents & Safer Neighborhoods*, the authors discuss how a longer school day can support achievement in reading and math while providing a richer, broader curriculum. The book discusses extended day success stories in public schools throughout the country, the impact on teachers and families, and benefits for English language learners and children with learning disabilities.

Introduction

Since the end of World War II, most American children have attended school for approximately six and a half hours per day. Most dismissal bells ring around 2:30 p.m., some as early as 1:30. That's why, despite the widespread impression that children spend much of their time in school, the truth is they go to school for only about 20 percent of their waking hours. That's right — about one-fifth of their waking hours. Basically unquestioned for decades, these numbers help explain why American families are so poorly served by their own public schools.

Time to learn: core ideas of the new school day

In this book we tell the story of a new school day, a new schedule already in place in more than a thousand public schools that offers a genuine solution to our educational crisis. A powerful, realistic, attainable transformation of American public education, the new school day reinvigorates children's lives, dramatically improving academic success while narrowing the achievement gap, broadening and deepening what children learn, helping teachers become more effective, bringing greatly needed relief to parents, and making kids and neighborhoods safer by reducing juvenile crime, drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, car accidents, and mindless television watching and videogame playing. These are large claims. If we didn't have the evidence, we wouldn't be making them.

Results

Instead of narrowing the school curriculum to focus on reading and math, the new school day opens up the range of subjects students study and get exposure to. In new day schools, students explore music and the arts, a remarkable variety of enrichment activities, as well as a range of programs in social and emotional learning. All these activities contribute mightily to helping children receive a truly well-rounded education. There's good evidence that the new school day improves the overall school learning climate by raising attendance and by reducing disciplinary referrals and what are blandly called "serious incidents."

The new school day also produces that most elusive of academic results: striking improvements in test scores. We have lots more examples in the rest of Time to Learn, but for the moment, here's a brief taste.

In Massachusetts, after just one year of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative, which added 30 percent (about two hours) to a redesigned school day in ten urban elementary and middle schools, the ELT schools not only improved their own performance; they improved faster than the rest of the state. The average proficiency rate — that is, the percentage of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the statewide test known as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System — compared to the schools' performance for the four previous years, jumped 44 percent in math, 19 percent in science, and 39 percent in English language arts.

Measured against statewide averages, the ten ELT schools began to make progress in the single most difficult task in public education these days: closing the achievement gap. In math they narrowed the gap modestly, by just 2.4 percent. In science they shaved it by nearly 15 percent. In English language arts, they took a huge bite out of the gap, narrowing it by more than 35 percent!

Another group of schools we talk about in this book are public charter schools belonging to the well-known Knowledge Is Power Program, or KIPP network: fifty-seven elementary, middle, and high schools serving fourteen thousand overwhelmingly low-income (80 percent) African American and Latino (90 percent) students in seventeen states (and the District of Columbia), with concentrations in Houston, Texas, Newark, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C. KIPP schools all use 60 percent more time than the standard school schedule, going from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and involving some Saturday classes and several weeks during the summer. By every measure — national, statewide, and local — KIPP students not only improve themselves, they also outperform the great majority of their peers. Take KIPP D.C. Key Academy, in which 88 percent of eighth-grade students tested Proficient or above in math in 2006, more than three times the rate of D.C. eighth-graders as a whole (which was 27 percent); and 81 percent scored at least Proficient in reading, two and a half times the district total (32 percent). That same year 90 percent of KIPP Houston High School tenth graders passed the Texas statewide math exam, as compared to 49 percent of other Houston tenth graders. KIPP Ujima Village Academy in Baltimore was the highest-performing public school serving middle grades in the city in 2006; its seventh and eighth graders achieved the highest math scores in the state of Maryland.

These extraordinary results could be repeated for city after city, but let's leave KIPP for the moment with this astonishing statistic. Nearly four-fifths of students who complete KIPP's eighth grade (the network consists mostly of middle schools) have entered college; nationally, the proportion for low-income students is less than one in five.

The core idea

Our core idea is so simple and obvious we made it the title of this book: children need enough time to learn — to build the skills and develop the knowledge and well-roundedness required to work and thrive in the twenty-first century.

Of course time alone isn't enough.

Nothing considered by itself is enough to turn schools around — not the most gifted teachers, most inspiring principals, newest buildings, or most up-to-date equipment. Time, however, is an indispensable foundation for new levels of student achievement and educational success. And, like any precious resource, it can be wasted. Simply tacking extra time poorly spent onto the current school schedule, for example, doesn't get the job done.

How the new school day is different

In effective new day schools, teachers and principals talk constantly about how to make best use of time. They wrestle with finding the best ways to apply more time in core academic subjects, to help teachers incorporate more individualized instruction and project-based learning into their classes, and to balance added core academic time with more time for engaging enrichment in arts, music, drama, sports, and other essential aspects of a well-rounded education. They discuss and debate how to use data to inform their initial redesign plan for expanded time and then how to modify their approaches based on subsequent data. They work to balance added time for students with added time for teachers to work and plan together and to benefit from professional development. They blend more time for current teachers with the addition of time and services from outside individuals and community-based organizations. They use time as a tool to support other innovations and reforms.

When well used, added time bestows many blessings. Principals don't have to choose between math and social studies, between reading practice and science, or between core academics and arts, music, drama, or sports. Because the school day isn't so rushed, they're having fewer disciplinary problems and seeing fewer special education referrals. Kids are getting more opportunities and more choices for enrichment than ever before. And the kids' test scores are going up.

We think the evidence is clear — from teachers themselves as well as from test scores — that the new school day allows teachers to become far more effective in the classroom. A genuinely new school schedule uses significantly more time — ideally about two hours a day — to redesign the entire school schedule. Principals and teachers spend a good bit of up-front time planning how to use these new hours to deepen, enrich, and customize their program so students can:

- Master core academic subjects
- Practice new skills
- Receive individualized instruction and tutoring
- Get exposure to a broad array of topics
- Experience the arts, music, drama, and sports

In this book we take you inside new day classrooms to show how children are using the new schedule to ask questions and to learn actively through projects, experiments, and hands-on use of newly gained skills. Children occasionally grumble about the new schedule at first, but the evidence is that they soon some to accept it. Some, surprisingly enough, downright love it. "The teachers answer my questions," kids of all ages say over and over. How poignant! What else should school be about, if not answering kids' questions? In one school that had begun the expanded schedule, the district had a funding crunch and reverted to the old schedule. Kids demonstrated in favor of keeping the new school day at the

School Board meeting! One said he had friends who dropped out because they couldn't keep up any more — they didn't get their questions answered. How can anyone be satisfied with a school schedule that prevents teachers from answering their students' questions?

We listen to teachers in new day schools who love the extra time, which means they can allow classroom discussions to flow more freely and still provide small group and individual teaching for students based on skill level. An expanded school schedule engages students more fully, and children learn better in a more stimulating environment. By reducing the pressure on the system to cram math and reading and science into too few hours, the new school day opens up the schedule for subjects that students enjoy and teachers like to teach. Asked about the impact of Massachusetts' new school day on student academic performance, fully 70 percent of the teachers in new day schools said it was better (23 percent saw "no impact" and a tiny minority, 7 percent, thought it was worse).

Why it works

Teachers and principals have found that the new school day makes possible a series of fundamental changes.

First, students and teachers get more time on task. Students who fall behind get the time to catch up. Instead of experiencing the classroom as a place for failure and boredom, kids have success. Students who are already keeping up have a chance to explore more. In science, longer classes allow students to carry out experiments from beginning to end in a single session. No instructional technique benefits from a rushed school day.

"More time on task really makes a difference for our students," says Dr. Jean Teal, principal of Miami Edison High School. "Kids can really get that intensive instruction they need, where their weaknesses lie. It gives more opportunity to work with students. Teachers can develop their lessons and have kids engage for longer periods of time, using all these best practices we've put into place with our students." As one social studies teacher mourned after her school canceled the new school day for budget reasons, "The amount of material I could get through was amazing. You could introduce a concept, introduce primary sources to study it, have kids explore it in a group, and then come back and discuss the subject more in detail." Students get more opportunities for experiential learning and enrichment activities. Arts, music, drama, and recess—most of which have been reduced or eliminated in recent years on behalf of so-called core academic subjects—return to the classroom. At the Timilty Middle School in Boston, for instance, all students submit a project to the citywide science fair. At the Matthew J. Kuss School in Fall River, Massachusetts, according to the Boston Globe, "The once hit-or-miss drama program now regularly puts on major productions. . . . The troupe last fall staged a production of Macbeth, with the performers in professionally made costumes."

Teachers gain a greater ability to work with diverse skill levels at the same time. Longer periods enable teachers to divide the class into groups, and to make room for individual and small-group tutoring—and more students stay more engaged, rather than drifting off into inattention and eventual disciplinary problems and failure. Students and adults get to interact more and develop stronger relationships — one of the crucial foundations of student achievement.

Schools restore academic subjects that had been scaled back or even dropped due to the emphasis on core instruction and high-stakes testing in reading, writing, and math. Students are able to study crucial academic subjects such as science, history, social studies, and foreign languages. Finally, teachers have time to work with each other in planning how they teach their students, time that almost never exists in the current school schedule. From Miami to Boston, Houston to Newport News, principals and teachers talked to us about the importance of teachers' getting more (and more targeted) professional development — training to be more effective — as well as much more grade-level and subject-level planning time. These crucial new hours allow teachers to assess their students' progress and their own techniques, and to zero in on kids who need extra help.

Making kids smarter

The real test of the new school day is that it's already working, and in some cases working wonders, for hundreds of thousands of students in schools that have already adopted it:

- In public charter schools
- In elite private schools
- In affluent suburbs where parents create a new day by purchasing after-school activities
- In the thirty-nine-school School Improvement Zone in the poorest big city in the country — Miami
- In Massachusetts, where the Expanded Learning Time Initiative is rapidly expanding

Still, even successful experiments only rarely sweep through the nation's school districts on their own. We've written this book to give the new school schedule an additional boost.

English language learners

The new day make a big difference to some other groups of public school students, too. How about English language learners, kids who are learning English as a second (or third or fourth) language while they're going to school? Raise your hand if you think these children (numbering in the millions nationally) would do better in school if they had more time to work with their teachers on their English language skills, and to practice English with their schoolmates. Keep your hand raised if you think that these children would be better off seeking homework help from their parents, many of whom are learning English themselves, and many of whom did not have advanced schooling in their home countries. Ah, you're such a good class!

Many native-born Americans complain that too many of our newest immigrants don't bother to learn English. Why then wouldn't we as a society want their children to learn English as quickly as possible, something that will happen in an active, engaging school day far faster than passively in front of a television? Immigrant parents, not coincidentally, overwhelmingly prefer the new school day when given the chance, even though

many of them work in just the kind of small businesses that can make good use of the extra labor of children in the family. We saw this among immigrant parents in Malden, Massachusetts, and we saw it in Miami Edison High School.

"We have another group," said Principal Jean Teal, "that we call 'new beginnings,' who've had no formal schooling in their own country. They've never had instruction, fifteen- or sixteen-year-olds who've never gone to school, never had phonics, never held a pencil. They stay homogeneously in their own cohort; they travel together, and we start teaching them from kindergarten on up. A lot of our students are English language learners, because their primary language is Creole. [Miami Edison is in Little Haiti.] All together 240 of our 1150 students are taking English as a second language."

Special needs children

Then there are the children with learning disabilities, children with ADHD, and the entire category of "special needs" children. The whole point of identifying children with difficulties in learning is to be able to give them additional instruction tailored to their individual needs or disabilities. Special needs education takes patience and, above all, time. Remember Dorcas Chavez's autistic son Kenan in Boston, who rode a school bus more than an hour each way to his new day school? His mother was tremendously excited about his social and motor-skill progress in less than a year, and she has been able to move her hours to full time instead of staying part time to care for her son in the afternoons. Parents of special needs children worry all the more about what happens to their kids in unsupervised settings, and many make substantial financial sacrifices to be with them. Look at how this mother's experience of the new school day played out: not only did her son get excited about school, he was making important social progress —and she was able to increase the family income. Who knows? Maybe, working full time, her job started providing health benefits.

"We have inclusion math class," Mrs. Cohen of Jose de Diego Middle School in Miami's Zone told us, "special ed and regular kids together, doing math together. Because of the Zone, we are doing many more inclusion classes, and it's working better. Now we pair a special ed and math teacher. So kids do better. Special ed kids work better with other kids, sort of see them as role models and learn from them."

Here's another way to think about children and school. When school is a place of engagement, excitement, and felt success, children like it. When it's a nonstop struggle, a site for frequent failure, a place where slower kids get ignored by teachers in a hurry or routinely teased by quicker classmates, school for them becomes a dreary, unpleasant, depressing slog, and can't end too soon. When there's not enough time for learning-disabled children to learn in the ways they can learn best, we're giving them an alienating experience of school that actively discourages them from higher education — and works against vocational success in their future lives as well.

Our interview with Chris Gabrieli

Gabrieli, C, & Goldstein, W (2008). *Time to Learn: How a New School Schedule Is Making Smarter Kids, Happier Parents & Safer Neighborhoods*. Jossey-Bass.

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HUFFINGTON POST 11/12/2011 03:54 pm ET | Updated Jan 12, 2012

High School Pressure: Why Students Need Shorter Days

Rachel D., Brooklyn, NY

This is a teen-written article from our friends at Teenink.com.

Students have a limited amount of power in school, which is one of the main reasons for cutting classes. Students feel as though schools try to contain them and that they are not able to be themselves. They are forced to sit in a chair for a certain amount of time and to quietly complete assignments. The thought of this recurring activity results in students caring less about school, which eventually makes their grades decrease. By shortening the school days, students wouldn't be as distressed about going to school and their grades would be higher. Fewer school hours per day would permit students to have enough time to study, complete school assignments, participate in after-school activities and be able to get to bed by a decent hour.

The school day is primarily seven hours long. Most of us have a wide range of after-school activities. Some participate in clubs while other have jobs or are on sports teams. Some participate in more than one after-school activity. By the time we are finished with the school day and their activities, there isn't much time for them to complete homework assignments and study for exams. Instead, we result to quickly completing our homework and we do not receive any educational value from it. Also, we may not have time to study at all, which would result in failing grades.

Long school hours put much pressure on students. We may tend to slack off which could be harmful for their education in the long run. In classes now, the lesson usually doesn't start until about ten minutes into the period, once the students have settled into their places. This is also because students feel that if they are late to class, the time would go by faster. If about ten minutes were cut from each class, the time would add up. The students would most likely go to their classes on time, because the class would overall be shorter and able for them to handle. A shorter day would leave more time for us to enjoy their lives and not have to rush through activities or assignments. We would be able to do everything at a slower and calmer pace rather than rushing. By cutting time out of the school day, the students' education level would not be hurt. The students would be able to retain the same information whether it was taught within an hour or half an hour.

Many people could say that since work hours are long, that school hours should be long as well. This view is not necessarily true. We starts out in school and then work our way up to a steady job as we get older. Therefore, at one point everyone will be working long hours. Students should not have to work as long as some adults do. Also, some jobs do not require work to be done after work hours. We the students, on the other hand, have to continue working by completing their homework assignments.

A shorter school day can only be seen as a positive change. Both students, teachers and administrators would benefit from the change. Teachers would be able to have some free time and be able to educate students. The students would gain more time for fun while also having time to gain an excellent education.

 High School Pressure: Why Students Need Shorter Days

This piece has also been published in Teen Ink's monthly print magazine.

BEFORE YOU GO

How to Stay Focused Under Stress

Elizabeth Perle

Suggest a correction

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High School Pressure: Why Students Need Shorter Days

Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)

Average number of hours in the school day and average number of days in the school year for public schools, by state: 2007–08

State	Average number of hours in the school day	Average number of days in the school year
United States	6.64	180
Alabama	7.03	180
Alaska	6.48	180
Arizona	6.43	181
Arkansas	6.89	179
California	6.24	181
Colorado	7.01	171
Connecticut	6.47	181
Delaware	6.68	181
District of Columbia	6.91	181
Florida	6.43	184
Georgia	6.79	181
Hawaii	6.26	179
Idaho	6.63	173
Illinois	6.50	177
Indiana	6.77	180
Iowa	6.85	180
Kansas	6.98	178
Kentucky	6.69	180
Louisiana	7.08	178
Maine	6.47	176
Maryland	6.59	180
Massachusetts	6.45	180
Michigan	6.56	178
Minnesota	6.28	176
Mississippi	6.99	181
Missouri	6.70	177
Montana	6.79	179
Nebraska	6.92	178
Nevada	6.30	180
New Hampshire	6.54	180
New Jersey	6.44	181
New Mexico	6.85	177
New York	6.59	182
North Carolina	6.75	180
North Dakota	6.58	176
Ohio	6.61	180
Oklahoma	6.63	176
Oregon	6.57	172
Pennsylvania	6.43	181
Rhode Island	6.27	180
South Carolina	6.92	181
South Dakota	6.83	173
Tennessee	7.03	180
Texas	7.17	180
Utah	6.28	182
Vermont	6.66	177
Virginia	6.62	181
Washington	6.22	179
West Virginia	6.87	182
Wisconsin	6.91	180
Wyoming	6.86	175

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Data File," 2007-08.

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As students get older, most schools go to a longer class time. Typically, classes last between fifty and ninety minutes, depending on the way the school is set up and the style of the classes. Ideal class length, however, is much shorter. Maintaining a shorter duration for classes, like the thirty minute classes at The Tenney School, allows students to maximize their learning time and experience a number of rewards.

Student Attention Span

Even college-level students only have an average attention span of about ten minutes, particularly when it comes to sitting in a chair and listening to instruction. Any lecture that last longer than that is sure to end with students missing a chunk of the instructional material as their minds wander. While there are plenty of strategies for maintaining student attention, including removing distractions and providing plenty of movement breaks, one of the most critical strategies for improving student attention is to break up the instruction into smaller periods of time–and that's exactly what The Tenney School provides for its students.

Disadvantages of Longer Class Times

Many teachers argue that they're able to break up student learning time on their own. A teacher who has the same students in their classroom for ninety minutes can certainly work to break up the class structure, but there are several things that work against students when class times are dragged out.

- Teachers spend more time on classroom maintenance. When you know that you have ninety minutes, it's easier to stretch out things like taking attendance, taking up papers, and other daily tasks. Before they know it, valuable instruction time is gone.
- It's easier for teachers to judge the length of their lessons. The longer the lesson, the harder it becomes to judge exactly how long something is going to take.
- There's often empty instructional time at the end of the class. Teachers are aware that they can only give students so much information at a time. They work in time to get a head start on homework, time for questions that students might not have, and simply allow students to socialize at the end of class in order to "give them a break" instead of teaching from bell to bell.
- There's little evidence that offers any benefit concerning longer class times.

The Advantages of Shorter Classes

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Shorter classes, on the other hand, provide a number of advantages that students at The Tenney School are able to enjoy every day.

- Constantly shifting classes break up the day and prevent boredom.
- Learning time is maximized as teachers work quickly to incorporate the day's necessary instruction.
- Instruction is fresh and changed on a regular basis.
- Teachers dive straight into instruction as soon as the class starts, with fewer interruptions for maintenance.
- Students actually receive more total class time as a result of shortened periods. Longer class periods lead to less total time spend in a given class.
- There's less instructional time lost for each individual class as a result of days off, including both days off for weather-related emergencies and individual sick days for students.
- Students have more time to learn new material. This is particularly useful for classes like math and languages, where one skill builds on another and students need time to practice and consider the material before proceeding to the next step in the process.

If you're looking for a school where student needs are taken into consideration and class times are shortened to improve student learning potential, contact us. We'll commit to building a school environment that offers more opportunities for your student while encouraging them to fully reach their academic potential.

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Time in school: How does the U.S. compare?

There is a perception among policymakers and the public that U.S. students spend less time in school than students in other countries. As U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan stated at a recent Congressional hearing:

"Our students today are competing against children in India and China. Those students are going to school 25 to 30 percent longer than we are. Our students, I think, are at a competitive disadvantage. I think we're doing them a disservice."

But is perception reality? Do students in other countries spend more time in school than students here in the U.S.? Secretary Duncan provided data to back up his claims. But do those claims tell the whole story? This brief takes a closer look at the data to answer the question: Do U.S. students spend less time in school than students in other countries?

First we'll examine the specific claim that children in India and China spend 25 to 30 percent longer in school than students in the U.S. Then, we'll compare the amount of instructional time states require compared to what the rest of the world requires, including high-performing countries such as Korea, Finland, and Japan.

Are students in India and China required to go to school longer than U.S. students?

The answer appears to be no. According to data from the OECD and the World Data on Education, students in China and India are not required to spend more time in school than most U.S. students.

How Time Was Calculated

For this report, time measurements were based on the minimum number of hours of instruction per year (also known as compulsory hours) countries require their public schools to provide in a formal classroom setting. However, not all countries' statutes explicitly define what counts as instructional time. In general, they include actual instruction time, so lunch is typically not included. However, recess and transition time between classes are explicitly included in some statutes while excluded in others. While this report attempts to provide the best possible comparisons, the data should not be read as the exact number of hours of teaching students receive.

For most countries, the instructional hours were taken from the **OECD's Education at a Glance 2011 Table D1.1**. The OECD table did not provide instructional hours for the United States,

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since compulsory laws are set at the state level. Therefore, state-by-state data was taken from the **Education Commission of the States' (ECS) Number of Instructional Days/Hours in the School Year** (August 2011). For India and China, instructional hours were taken from the **World Data on Education Seventh Edition 2010-11**. These reports were used because they each based instructional time on the statutes that dictate the minimum number or hours/days of instruction schools are required to provide.

While these reports' numbers may not capture the precise amount of teaching students receive, they do provide the best apples-to-apples comparison of how much instructional time countries expect all of their students to receive.

TIMSS is one of the few reports that does compare countries' actual teaching time, even though it does not include all developed countries mentioned in this report. To see how much math instruction U.S. students receive compared to other countries, check out **this data**.

How do we know this? Since every state has its own time requirements for schools, it is difficult to compare the U.S. as a whole to other countries. (see box) However, time requirements typically do not vary dramatically from state to state. Most require between 175 and 180 days of school and/or between 900 and 1,000 hours of instructional time per year, depending on the grade level. Without the ability to compare instructional time as a whole for the U.S., we'll compare instructional time in China and India to 5 states that enroll a significant portion of U.S. students—California, Florida, New York, Texas, and Massachusetts.

It is also important to keep in mind that the time students spend in school varies by grade level. In most countries, younger children receive fewer instructional hours than students in higher grades. That is the case in India and China as well. In India, schools are open 200 days a year for grades 1-5, for a total of 800 instructional hours per year, compared to 220 days and 1,000 instructional hours in grades 6-8 (World Data on Education). This could be the source of Secretary Duncan's assertion: 220 days is nearly 25 percent more than the typical 180 days students attend school in the U.S.

But this does not mean they are receiving 25 percent more instruction because the total actual instructional hours are quite similar. For example, India's 800 instructional hours at the elementary school level is actually less than what is required at the elementary level in California (840 hours), Florida (900 hours in grades 4-6), New York (900 hours), Texas (1,260 hours1), and Massachusetts (900 hours). As a matter of fact, just 8 states2 require fewer than 800 hours of instructional time. Even in most of those states, the reduced hours only apply to grades 1 through 3. Interestingly, fewer hours do not seem to relate to student performance. Elementary students in half of these states perform above the national average3, while in the other half elementary students score below the national average.

The 1,000 instructional hours India requires in grades 6-8 (middle school) is similar to the requirement in most states. According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS), 35 states4 require at least 990 hours of instruction at the middle school level, including Texas (1260 hours5), New York (990 hours) and Massachusetts (990 hours). Even though middle school students in India attend nearly 25 percent more days of school per year than U.S. students, they are not required to receive more hours of instruction.

Determining required school time in China is not so straightforward. The data is not clear about the number of days students in China attend school, as that varies by region. However, we used multiple sources to estimate the number of hours per year students in China attended school. According to the OECD, the number of weeks of instruction in China is 35 compared to the U.S.'s 36 weeks. Some Chinese students attend school six days a week, so even though the U.S. has more instructional weeks Chinese students could be attending school nearly 20 percent more days per year.

Students in China may attend more days of school each year, but the key question is, are they receiving more hours of instruction? To find the answer, we combined data from the World Data on Education-- which provided the number of courses per week schools are expected to offer—

with data from OECD on weeks of instruction to determine total instructional hours per year. The data shows that Chinese students in primary grades (grades 1-5) take 34 courses per week at 45 minutes6 apiece. This equates to nearly 900 hours of instruction per year, which is similar to or less than many U.S. states, including Florida, New York, Texas, and Massachusetts. At the middle school level (grades 6-8), Chinese students attend just under 1,000 hours of school per year, a figure similar to that of most U.S. states. Just as with India, the data shows that Chinese students are not required to receive 25 to 30 percent more in-school instruction per year than U.S. students.

Do other countries require more instructional hours for students than the U.S.?

China and India are important comparisons, but other countries could provide even greater insight into whether U.S. students are spending as much time in school, particularly countries that typically score high on international assessments, such as Korea, Japan, Finland, and Canada, as well as economic competitors such as England, France, Germany, and Italy. The data set that allows us to do this comes from the OECD. It does not include the number of school days, but looks directly at required instructional hours.

According to the OECD, the hours of compulsory instruction per year in these countries range from 608 hours in Finland (a top performer) to 926 hours in France (average) at the elementary level, compared to the over 900 hours required in California, New York, Texas, and Massachusetts. Of particular note, no state requires as few hours as Finland, even though Finland scores near the top of nearly every international assessment. As a matter of fact, Vermont – a high-performing state7 -- requires the fewest number of hours (700 hours) for its elementary students (grades 1-2) than any other state, and it still requires more than Finland. Vermont's requirement is also more than the 612 hours high-achieving Korea requires of its early elementary students. Moreover, all but 5 states require more hours of instruction at the early elementary school level than the OECD countries8 average of 759 hours.

At the middle school level, total hours of instruction range from 777 hours in Finland (a top performer) to 1001 in Italy (an average performer). Three of our 5 large states, New York (990 hours), Texas (1,260 hours), and Massachusetts (990 hours) would rank near the top of all industrialized nations in number of hours required. California and Florida would rank near the middle at 900 hours but still above the OECD average of 886 hours. It should be noted that even at the middle school level, countries like Japan and Korea require fewer hours (868 and 867 respectively) than most U.S. states. So by the 8th grade, students in most U.S. states have been required to receive more hours of instruction than students in most industrialized countries, including high-performing Finland, Japan, and Korea.

In most countries, there is a significant increase in the time students are required to be in school at the high school level. In the U.S., most states require the same number of hours in high school as in middle school. Just as they did at middle school level, Finland (856 hours) and Italy (1,089 hours) required the fewest and most hours of instruction respectively. Italy's 1,089 hours surpasses all but 2 out of our 5 selected states. Texas requires 1,260 hours of instruction at the high school level, while California requires 1,080 hours. Korea requires 1,020 hours of instruction at the high school level. Nearly half (22) the states require more instructional hours than Korea. Moreover, the vast majority of states (42) require more hours of instruction than the OECD average of 902 hours. Again, there's no evidence that students in other countries are required to receive more instruction than students in the United States.

Are U.S. students receiving less instruction?

The data clearly shows that most U.S. schools require at least as much or more instructional time as other countries, even high-performing countries like Finland, Japan, and Korea. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these comparisons are based on required minimums. It's possible that certain schools in these countries and states do provide more time for instruction. Furthermore, students in countries like China, India, Japan, and Korea have a tradition of receiving additional instruction through non-formal schooling such as tutoring and night schools, especially at the high school level, which could also have an impact.

However, the point should not be lost: the U.S. does not require schools to provide less instructional time than other countries.

Basing policy decisions on this false perception alone could be costly and provide no clear benefits. Providing extra time is only useful if that time is used wisely. As the Center's report Making Time found, the relationship between time and student learning is not about the amount of time spent in school. Rather, it is how effectively that time is used. And this report has also shown that there is no relationship between simply requiring more time and increased achievement. The data shows that a number of countries that require fewer hours of instruction outperform the U.S., while the U.S. performs as well as or better than some other countries that require more hours of instruction.

Providing additional time can be an effective tool for improving student outcomes, but how that time is used is most important. Before policymakers and education leaders decide to increase the time students spend in school, they should first consider these things from the Making Time report:

Determine how effectively school time is currently being used. For instance, states that are considering increasing instructional time should examine their academic standards along with all other requirements schools are expected to provide to determine whether they currently require enough school time to meet them.

Explore scheduling alternatives that use existing time. For example, school districts could consider implementing a year-round calendar with the standard 180 days as a way to offset summer learning loss.

If considering block scheduling, look at the research. Block scheduling is intended to increase time on task, but the research results are mixed, with the 4X4 block producing the least gains. However, block scheduling can also provide time for teachers' professional development or pull-out time for struggling students.

Low-cost options, like four-day weeks, can prove beneficial to achievement as well. The research isn't definitive, but some districts that have tried this are seeing unintended benefits in the form of higher test scores, decreased disciplinary problems, greater collaboration among teachers, and higher morale.

Logistics can be challenging, but are solvable. In considering any change to school schedules, the biggest hurdle will often be logistics. Cost and child care (for instance, in moving to a year-round schedule) can be two of the biggest hurdles. Look at school success stories like this one to see how some school districts addressed these concerns.

1Includes recess and lunch
2Out of the 47 states that reported plus the District of Columbia (Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Montana, & New Jersey)
3Based on 2011 NAEP 4th grade reading scale scores.
4Out of the 47 states that reported plus the District of Columbia
5Includes recess and lunch
6Each period is 45 minutes according to the World Data on Education, 7th edition- China
7According to National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)
8The average of all OECD countries with reported instructional time. The OECD average is an estimate of all industrialized countries.

 This piece was written and researched by Jim Hull, Center for Public Education's Senior Policy Analyst, and Mandy Newport, Policy Intern.

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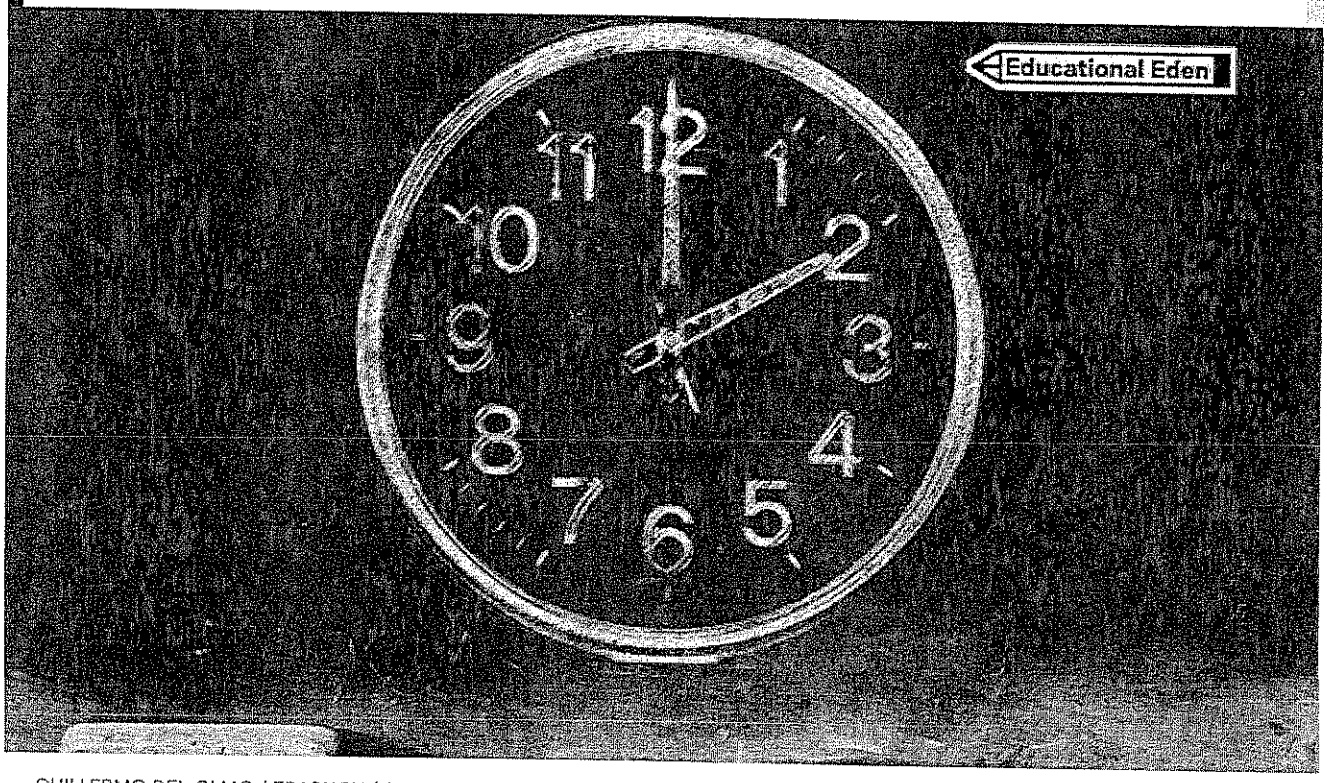
EDUCATION

Fixing America's Broken School Calendar

We asked education experts how much time they think kids should spend in class. Here's what they had to say.

HAYLEY GLATTER, EMILY DERUY, AND ALIA WONG AUG 29, 2016



GUILLERMO DEL OLMO / ERASHOV / SHUTTERSTOCK / ZAK BICKEL / THE ATLANTIC

Nothing is perfect, but what if it could be?

Back-to-school season is in full swing, and despite the crispness of new notebook paper and the allure of Friday night lights, it's hard to ignore the serious inequities, debates, and issues currently hampering America's education system. Students will walk down hallways they haven't seen since June with questions of segregation raging around them. Teachers will greet their pupils as public-school systems around the country are flailing. And administrators will continue on as innovative ideas about how best to reach learners emerge. And so, it's no surprise that many are entering the school year with both aspiration and trepidation.

With that in mind, we asked a variety of prominent voices in education—from policy makers and teachers to activists and parents—what their vision of a perfect school system would be. We asked them to look beyond laws, politics, and funding

to imagine a utopian system of learning. We wanted to know how these men and women would critically examine the most macro and micro aspects of school and reform these elements in a perfect world. They went back to the drawing board—and the chalkboard—to build their educational Garden of Eden. We'll be publishing their answers to one question every day this week. The responses have been lightly edited for clarity and length.

Today's assignment: The Calendar. How much of the year will students spend in school?

Rita Pin Ahrens, *the director of education policy for the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center*

Students will be in school year round, with the equivalent of eight weeks of vacation distributed throughout the year—two weeks every season. This will diminish the frequency and extent of summer learning loss, reduce the need to review at the start of the school year for certain subjects, and provide more time and opportunities to go into more depth in the curriculum. Summer will not be a time for parents to worry about what they are doing with their children, especially for elementary- and middle-school students, as it will be no different from the fall, winter, or spring.

Schools will be open five days a week, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., from kindergarten to grade 12, though the start times for academic learning will vary by age and developmental needs. Also, students will not have to be physically at school every day or all day. This will allow for other learning opportunities and environments to be integrated into a child's education. This schedule flexibility will allow for more extracurriculars before and after school and better match parents' working schedules.

Nicholson Baker, *the author of* Substitute: Going to School With a Thousand Kids

Once, working as a substitute teacher, I asked a class full of chatty seventh-grade math students how they would design the school day. A girl said that it should be illegal to start the day before 11 in the morning and illegal for it to end after 11:01. A boy disagreed: "They'd just give you a ton of homework," he said. Another girl thought the day should start at noon and go for about an hour. "We could all use 40

minutes of schooling," she said. A quiet boy said that four hours of school would be about right.

The days, the years, can feel fearsomely long—to teachers and students both. Nobody's learning enough to justify all those hours. A sense of timewaste and exhaustion hangs in the air. Something drastic has to happen. The simplest solution is to cut the length of a typical day in half.

Carol Burris, *the executive director of the Network for Public Education*

Students in high-performing nations like Finland, Korea, and Japan spend the same or less time as American students in school. The myth that American students spend less time learning than students in other industrialized nations is not true. It is also clear from studies that increasing school time is very expensive and there is little return in achievement. Reductions in class size and peer tutoring, for example, have been found to be far more effective.

That being said, we do know that students from disadvantaged homes experience summer reading learning loss, while students from affluent homes experience small gains, and all students lose a little bit of knowledge in mathematics in the summer. Rather than lengthening the school day, which exhausts young children and deprives older children of the opportunity to engage in extracurricular activities and sports, a better alternative is to provide targeted, enriched learning activities, especially in the summer.

We will fund summer day camps for disadvantaged students that are staffed by certified teachers that integrate enrichment and recreational activities with some reading, science, and mathematical experiences intertwined. Similar programs will be designed for students who are learning English. Good after-school childcare that provides enrichment and recreation within neighborhood schools will be available for every child.

Catherine Cushinberry, *the executive director of Parents for Public Schools*

School will be year-round with intercessions built in so students can take time off to relax at home, travel with their families, get tutoring, address other needs and public interests, or have access to additional courses they are interested in, such as

martial arts. Students will have the opportunity to job shadow or participate in experiential trips outside of their community or city. Long summer vacation will be a thing of the past. We will move away from the agrarian calendar and recognize the needs of the information age. The school day will be an eight-hour day, five days a week, to correspond with the typical hours of daytime working families. In-school classes for students ages 5- to 6-years-old will be 35 minutes, 7- to 14-year-olds will spend 45 minutes focused on topics, and the 15- to 18-year-olds' classes will last 60 minutes each. All will have to be interactive and engaging.

Michael Horn, *the co-founder of the Clayton Christensen Institute*

Each student will spend as much or as little of their time in school as needed to be successful. Schools will be more accessible—open for greater hours during the day for more days of the year—and flexible—with individuals able to arrive when it makes sense for them and able to stay longer. This will be possible because we will view learning as a 24/7 endeavor that doesn't just take place in school. Online and mobile learning platforms will stretch our sense of what is possible.

We will also understand that schools play a valuable custodial role in the lives of students, keeping them safe and, in some cases, well nourished. And we will see schools as a gathering place for students to work with their peers in a variety of endeavors—academic projects and extracurricular activities—as well as with teachers and other community members. No longer will days be organized in strict time blocks of "classes," but instead, students will work in different learning studios suited for the type of work they need to undertake—be that individual or group work. Students will progress when they master concepts, not based on the calendar.

Richard Kahlenberg, *a senior fellow at The Century Foundation*

The American school calendar, with its long summer break, is a critical driver of inequality of opportunity. Years ago, researchers at Johns Hopkins University noted that low-income students do comparatively well during the school year but then suffer a summer setback in learning. Doris Entwisle, Karl Alexander, and Linda Steffel Olson noted, "children from poor and middle-class families make comparable gains during the school year, but while the middle-class children make

gains when they are out of school during the summer, poor and disadvantaged children make few gains or even move backwards academically."

Free public schooling will be offered year round. But the summer curriculum will look different than that that of the regular school year. As the Hopkins scholars noted, traditional summer-school programs—which generally provide more of the same from the traditional school year—have been disappointing, leading to few academic gains for students. Instead, summer programs will consist of the type of programs that middle-class children enjoy during the summer—trips to zoos, parks, and museum that enrich learning.

The school day will also start and end later than it currently does. Scheduling will be based on health research on the optimal hours for student learning, not the convenience of adults.

Michelle Rhee, *the founder of StudentsFirst and the former chancellor of Washington, D.C., public schools*

Students and their families will have the option to choose the schooling calendar that is best for them. Traditional, year-round, semester, and trimester options will be available to best support community members. School districts will also provide morning and evening programming and learning opportunities for families who seek extended school-day options. Class lengths may vary across schools, but teachers and students will both have ample time for instruction and hands-on applications.

Randi Weingarten, *the president of the American Federation of Teachers*

We will reimagine public education with multiple pathways for students to discover and pursue their own passions. So when we think about the calendar, we will think much less about identifying a magic number of days, and more about what students and communities need.

It isn't simply more time in class. In countries that outperform us, students spend less time in class, not more. Children—especially young children—learn through play and activities.

Some kids may need a safe place in the evening, a meal during school breaks, or opportunities for engagement and learning outside of school hours. That's where community schools can play a big role, especially in hard-hit areas—staying open late and year-round, offering a place for kids to find activities that keep them engaged and out of harm's way.

And the summer learning gap holds back kids who live in poverty and don't have the same opportunities for out-of-school learning as their more-advantaged peers. We will ensure that kids have those kinds of opportunities in high-poverty communities, too. We will make sure schools are open longer hours for students and their families so they can stay engaged in learning through after-school and summer activities.

Check back tomorrow for the next installment in this series.

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Do Longer School Days Improve Student Achievement? Evidence from Colombia

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time period studied. Essentially, students in these schools were "late adopters," and were exposed to the treatment for a shorter period. There is no statistically significant impact of being exposed to a full school day for the schools in this subsample.

7. Conclusions and policy implications

This study provides some of the first evidence that longer school days have an impact on 5th grade and 9th grade academic achievement in Colombia. By using a school fixed effect model that exploits within-school changes in the length of the school day, I am able to control for observed and unobserved time-invariant characteristics of schools, mitigating some of the most critical selection and endogeneity problems that commonly occur when comparing different types of schools. I find that there is a positive impact of having a full school day (approximately 2-3 additional hours) on school achievement in 5th grade math, and 9th grade math and language SABER test scores. Results from the school fixed effects model show that among schools that changed the length of the school day between 2002 and 2009, the cohorts exposed to full school days have test scores that are about one tenth of a standard deviation higher than cohorts that attended half school days. This corresponds to approximately a 2.6 percent increase in test scores with respect to the mean for each grade, subject and year.

To put the magnitude of this effect in perspective, the impact of longer school days is smaller than other popular education interventions in Colombia, namely the PACES voucher program, and the contractual schools in Bogota. The PACES voucher program, which has received a lot of attention in the literature because of the use of a lottery to allocate vouchers, had an impact of about 0.2 standard deviations on student test scores relative to students who did not win the lottery (Angrist et al., 2002). While contractual schools in Bogota, which were traditional public schools whose administration was contracted out to reputed, not-for-profit private schools and universities, had an impact of 0.6 and 0.2 standard deviations in math and verbal tests, respectively, relative to traditional public schools (Bonilla-Angel, 2011). However, the magnitude of the impact estimated in this study is similar to other school interventions such as reducing class size by 4 students (Krueger, 1999), or the impact of charter schools on reading test scores (Angrist et al., 2012), and considering that two-tenths of a standard deviation is roughly the score gain associated with one additional school year (Cole, Trent, and Wadell, 1993), it is a

sizable effect. Overall, the results suggest that lengthening the school day may be an effective policy for increasing student achievement.

Further, I find that the impact of having a full school day is larger for math test scores than for language test scores in both 5th and 9th grade (e.g., 0.138 v. 0.11 respectively, for 9th graders). This result is not surprising, since, as other research has found, schools may play a larger role in teaching math relative to language, since language skills are often shaped by the home environment.

More notable is that the positive effects of a longer school day are stronger for 9th grade students than for 5th grade students (e.g., 0.138 v. 0.082 respectively, for math test scores). This makes sense since adolescents may be more likely to engage in risky behaviors outside of school than younger children. Even if they are not engaging in academic endeavors during the extra school hours, 9th graders are certainly spending less time exposed to risk factors outside of school, which ultimately translates into better academic achievement.

Finally, my results suggest that the effects of full school days are heterogeneous. The impact of being exposed to a full school day for 9th grade students is larger when compared to cohorts exposed to afternoon shifts. And, like many other interventions in developing countries, the impact of full school days on test scores is largest among the poorest schools and those in rural areas.

Overall, my findings complement those of previous studies in Colombia, which have found a positive impact of attending a full school day on dropout and grade repetition in primary (Garcia et al., 2013), and a positive impact of attending a full school day on graduation-exit tests (Bonilla-Mejia, 2011). Together, all these findings suggest that longer schools days have a positive impact on academic achievement and other student outcomes in Colombia. Therefore, lengthening the school day may be an effective policy for increasing student achievement, particularly for the lowest-income students in Colombia and other developing countries.

One argument against increasing the length of the school day is that it is not cost-effective, mainly due to the personnel costs which will significantly increase because of the need to hire new teachers, and to the high investments in infrastructure that are needed. However, in the Colombian case, there are some adjustments that could allow extending the school day (at

least in some schools) without a significant increase in costs. First of all, in some schools a different group of teachers serve different school shifts, so a change to a full school day would imply a salary increase for current teachers, but will not necessarily require hiring new teachers (Garcia et al., 2013). Similarly, there a large number of schools that have only a morning or an afternoon shift (Bonilla-Mejia, 2011). This means that there is an opportunity for increasing the length of the school day at least in those schools, without high investments in new infrastructure or constructing new schools.

A caveat with the main empirical strategy used in this paper, the school fixed effects model, is that it is not able to control for time-variant characteristics that could be correlated with both the change in the length of the school day and test scores. Although I argue that these are not likely to be large, future research should consider expanding the empirical work to include other quasi-experimental estimation strategies or, if possible, a randomized controlled trial to more definitively assess the impact of longer school days on student achievement.