



LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

SUBJECT: BALANCED SCHOOL DAY

DATE: 2005 Jul. 01

REVISED: 2006 Apr., 2010 Feb., 2012 Aug.

REFERENCE:

The purpose of this memorandum is not to advocate for the introduction of a balanced school day but rather to delineate some of the rationale that has been cited for introducing a balanced school day, the schedule, and the process for approval. Schools, for educational reasons, may consider the introduction of the balanced school day as being advantageous. The primary intent for changing any school organization should be that it meets the educational needs of the students and not that it will more readily meet the needs of collective agreements.

The Balanced School Day essentially divides the school day into three large instructional periods separated by two nutrition and activity periods. Rather than the day consisting of 300 instructional minutes with two 15 minute recesses and a 60-minute lunch break, the day is "balanced" with 300 instructional minutes broken up by two breaks, one at least 40 minutes and one at least 50 minutes. A minimum of 20 minutes for nutrition is allocated in each break. This approach to the school day offers the following advantages:

- Brain compatible research supports the balanced day as it optimizes student focus on the learning task, and maintains adequate nutrition levels.
- Traditional recess-lunch-recess results in 3 times when classroom time is lost; the balanced day reduces the number of re-entry times.
- Two eating times are provided resulting in a healthier balance of food during the day.
- The last period of the day may be more efficiently used.
- The shorter outdoor periods reduce the negative effect of poor weather conditions (e.g., long indoor recesses, long spells outside in hot/cold temperatures).

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Sample Daily Schedule:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 8:55 a.m. | Warning Bell |
| 9:00 a.m. | Entrance Bell |
| 9:00 - 10:40 a.m. | Instructional Block #1 (100 minutes) |
| 10:40 - 11:30 a.m. | Nutritional Break / Recess (25 min. in class / 25 min. outside - 50 minutes) |
| 11:30 - 1:10 p.m. | Instructional Block #2 (100 minutes) |
| 1:10 - 1:50 p.m. | Nutritional Break / Recess (20 min. in class / 20 min. outside - 40 minutes) |
| 1:50 - 3:30 p.m. | Instructional Block #3 (100 minutes) |
| 3:30 p.m. | Dismissal |

Note: One of the scheduled nutrition breaks / recess (a.m. **OR** p.m.) must be at least 50 minutes.

The Education Act (Regulation 298, Section 3.1 to 3.8 re: Daily Sessions) states that:

1. Teachers AND students need 40 minutes of uninterrupted lunch time; and
2. Primary and Junior Students need a minimum of 10 minutes of recess time in the morning AND in the afternoon.

First of all, we start with the need for a minimum 40 minutes in the morning AND afternoon to ensure that all staff receive 40 minutes of uninterrupted lunch time.

Secondly, for students:

If we have a morning break of 40 minutes, 10 minutes must be a recess and the remaining 30 minutes is just a break (it cannot qualify as lunch as it must be 40 minutes uninterrupted). Then we must have an afternoon break of 40 minutes for lunch plus 10 minutes for recess for a total of 50 minutes.

BALANCED SCHOOL DAY - PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

(Note: This process is for schools that are considering making a change from a traditional schedule to a balanced day schedule.)

1. Establish a committee comprised of parents, community members, and both teaching and non-teaching staff to investigate the possibilities, discuss benefits / shortfalls, consult with employee groups, and seek input from School Council.
2. Hold community meetings to provide information, rationale surrounding the proposal, and identify benefits and challenges.
3. Conduct a community survey. A minimum of a 75 % return rate with a minimum of 80% acceptance is required before change may be considered.

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4. Submit a proposal through the Superintendent of Student Achievement to Administrative Council outlining the proposed schedule and seeking permission to initiate a short-term pilot; e.g., September to December.
5. Re-survey parents to determine merits and views of the program to date. A minimum of a 75 % return rate with a minimum of 80% acceptance is required before change may be confirmed.
6. Submit a recommendation through the Superintendent of Student Achievement to Administrative Council for approval to continue or discontinue. Note that an overview of how the trial has gone along with the community survey results must be included.

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