



STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

131 WEST NITTANY AVENUE • STATE COLLEGE PENNSYLVANIA • 16801-4899
TELEPHONE: 814-231-1042 FAX: 814-231-4130

TO: Robert O'Donnell and Board of School Directors

FROM: Jason Perrin

DATE: October 22, 2014

RE: Elementary School Day Survey: Summary and Recommendation

Please find the attached summary and recommendation regarding the recent parent survey specific to the Elementary School Day. This information was presented to the Culture, Climate, and Learning (CCL) subcommittee of the board on October 16, 2014. The attached document includes additions based on feedback from that meeting.

I will be in attendance at the board meeting on Monday, October 27, to answer any questions that you may have.

**SCASD Survey: Exploration of Extending the Elementary School Day
Update for Board of School Directors
October 27, 2014**

The survey was sent to parents/guardians of current K-6 students (3423). We received 1294 responses. A summary of those responses is outlined below.

Summary of Responses

1. Do you support the exploration of extending the elementary school day an additional 30-40 minutes?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	78.9%	1012
No	21.1%	271
	<i>Answered Question</i>	<i>1283</i>
	<i>Skipped Question</i>	<i>11</i>

2. If you answered “yes” to question 1; For which purpose(s) would you support the additional time? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Core Subjects (Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies)	77.6%	775
World Languages (Spanish, French, German, Chinese, etc.)	67.4%	673
*Other	17.7%	177
	<i>Answered Question</i>	<i>999</i>
	<i>Skipped Question</i>	<i>295</i>

***Other:**

General trends in the comments supporting exploration included a desire for more recess and physical activity. Physical activity emerged both in comments regarding structured Phys Ed as well as unstructured play. The arts were also mentioned in several responses both in terms of music and art; along with comments relating to applied arts such as drama and other creative experiences. Comments supporting the Core were also included speaking specifically to experiences in STEM. Utilizing time for experiences in learning enrichment is also found in a few of the comments.

Sample Quotes:

- “I’d also hope to have a bit more activity during the day: Kids need to burn off excess energy in order to learn...”
- “I also strongly feel that more recess time is needed in the elementary grades...”
- “The children will also need more recess, if the school day is extended...there is not enough science in the elementary curriculum.”
- “Not expanding the curriculum but providing more in-class time to do the subject (in particular math) so not so much at-home work is needed.”
- “I would support increased time spent in “specials” as well—more trips to the library, more days with P.E., etc...”
- “...being sure that students have adequate daily physical activity...”
- “I support this if the time is used effectively and if it decreases the amount of homework that is sent home.”
- “More time for free play/recess and a longer (more reasonable) amount of time. They are important to social and emotional development, too.”

3. If you answered “no” to question 1; What is the reason for your response? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Current length of day is sufficient.	100%	253
**Other	45.8%	116
	<i>Answered Question</i>	253
	<i>Skipped Question</i>	1041

****Other:**

General trends in the comments not supportive of further exploration included concerns relating to already busy after school activity schedules. There were several concerns specific to the idea that increased instruction could lead to increased homework. There is definitely a concern that runs consistent through the comments in this section relating to an already limited amount of down time for families. A few of the comments had concerns about adding time for possible use for “test prep” along with the need for balance between quality and quantity. A number of responses spoke to a longer year as opposed to a longer day

Sample Quotes:

- “Longer day would take away from after school activities.”
- “I would encourage the district to focus on quality vs. quantity. Younger children have more limited attention spans, so extending the day likely means the overall marginal “educational efficiency” drops...”

“I think its more important to leave time in the day for other things like fresh air, exercise, family, unstructured playtime...”
 “Plus with the amount of homework students receive, this would equate to almost an 8 hour school day...”
 “I feel it would be pushing kids too hard, parents and kids would be getting less family time together...”
 “The day is already long enough, especially for kindergarteners”
 “...Adding additional school hours will only make their day longer and take away from social interaction outside of school hours.”
 “I feel my children would become too tired by the end of the day and therefore whatever instruction they were given late in the day would not be beneficial.”

**4. In which grade(s) do you currently have a child/children?
 (Please check all that apply.)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Pre-School	15.0%	193
Kindergarten	22.0%	284
Grade 1	20.3%	262
Grade 2	21.4%	276
Grade 3	20.2%	260
Grade 4	20.6%	266
Grade 5	20.6%	266
Grade 6	14.7%	189
	<i>Answered Question</i>	1290
	<i>Skipped Question</i>	4

**5. In which school(s) do you currently have a child/children?
 (Please check all that apply.)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Corl Street	8.5%	109
Radio Park	11.6%	149
Park Forest Elem.	14.6%	188
Houserville/Lemont	12.6%	162
Ferguson Twp.	13.1%	169
Mt. Nittany Elem.	8.9%	114
Grays Woods	14.6%	188
Easterly Parkway	10.5%	135
Park Forest Middle	9.9%	128
Mt. Nittany Middle	8.6%	111
Delta	1.6%	20
	<i>Answered Question</i>	1288
	<i>Skipped Question</i>	6

6. If you have any additional thoughts or comments about this particular topic, please provide them in the space below.

Open-Ended:

This section includes comments that further define or explain the open-ended responses from sections 2 and 3. Therefore it is a combination of reasons for supporting further exploration and reasons for not supporting further exploration; in more detail or using personal examples. Similarly from both viewpoints, there are comments that pertain to homework and the balance with after-school activities and family time. Of the respondents that were supportive of exploration, as mentioned above, the support is contained in a few consistent areas, but overall includes about 10 categories. Comments not supportive of further exploration reinforce that the current school day is long enough, that their child/children are already tired and hungry when they get home, and that adding time (quantity) would not necessarily translate to quality. This section also included general comments of support or non-support without listing specific reasons that would be contained in the broader categories mentioned in sections 2 and 3. As a final note, people seem to really enjoy/appreciate the CEEL program.

Recommendation

Given the summary data as a result of the survey, I would recommend further exploration of this topic. *I would also recommend that **Fall 2016** be the earliest possible date that any changes are considered.* There are several key concepts or ideas that would require a multi-faceted approach to this inquiry.

Key Concepts/Ideas:

1. Operational:

- A. Possible Length of Elementary School Day if extended?
- B. Possible time frame of day and resulting changes for grades 6-12?
This would include transportation considerations.
- C. Possible Elementary Schedule?

2. Educational:

- A. Programming (K-5) to be considered?
- B. Impact of K-5 programming changes on programming in Grades 6-12?

3. Impact:

- A. Staffing implications for programmatic changes?
- B. Budgetary implications regarding staffing needs?

If a majority of the board supports further exploration, we will create a draft process and timeline for each of the areas listed above. We will share the comprehensive draft process and timeline with the Culture Climate and Learning (CCL) committee of the board for feedback, prior to sharing it at a future board meeting.