

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Balanced School Day project

**Question: What exactly is meant by a ‘balanced school day’?**

*The Balanced School Day timetable divides the school day into three 100-minute blocks of instructional time. Two longer ‘nutrition’ breaks are provided in the morning and afternoon instead of traditional recesses and noon-hour lunch. This schedule creates equally balanced teaching/learning divisions to the school day.*

*These three equally spaced blocks of classroom time maximize classroom learning time and allow more time for children to focus on learning tasks.*

*The two ‘nutrition breaks’ of 40 and 50 minutes allow time for eating and activity in both the morning and afternoon. Nutrition breaks provide 20-25 minutes for eating, and 20-25 minutes for activity.*

**Question: What does the ‘balanced school day’ schedule look like?**

*Example of a Balanced School Day Timetable*

School begins	Period 1	Period 2	Nutrition Break	Period 3	Period 4	Nutrition Break	Period 5	Period 6	School Ends
8:40	8:50 – 9:40	9:40 – 10:30	10:30 – 11:20	11:20- 12:10	12:10- 1:00	1:00 - 1:40	1:40 – 2:30	2:30 – 3:20	3:20

**Question: What are the benefits of the ‘balanced school day’ schedule ?**

*Consistent feedback from the schools indicates the following benefits to a Balanced School Day schedule:*

- *more time for instruction*
- *a more settled day – especially in the last block*
- *fewer discipline problems*
- *significant reduction in food and garbage outside, hence fewer seagulls and stinging insects*
- *more easily scheduled presentations by external groups*
- *children eat better*
- *all staff get a break and benefit when planning time is attached to the break*
- *more flexible use of school facilities for student activities.*

**Question: What are the challenges faced by the balanced school day pilot schools?**

*Staff continue to problem-solve in the following areas:*

- *Half day professional development opportunities*
- *Schedules of part time staff*
- *Time to adjust to longer teaching blocks*
- *Coaching parents and students in packing two nutritious snacks*
- *Arranging office schedules in single secretary schools.*

**Question: What does current educational research indicate?**

*Little empirical (experimental) research on school day schedules – traditional or alternate, has been conducted. This may be due to an inability to control for the wide range of variables affecting student achievement. There is a considerable body of research on time as a variable that affects student achievement. Extended blocks of instructional time have been shown to positively influence learning outcomes. The Balanced School Day schedule provides three extended blocks of instructional time.*

**Question: Who participated in the survey?**

*Parents of children attending one of the eight pilot schools, teachers, educational assistants and students in Grades 3 to 8 were eligible survey participants. A random selection representing 30 % of all parents from each school and grade (Grades 1 to 8) were invited to complete a survey describing their perceptions about the Balanced Day School schedule. Over 52% of eligible parents responded.*

*All teachers, educational assistants and students at the eight pilot schools were invited to complete a web-based survey. Nearly half of all teachers and 42% of all students completed surveys.*

**Question: How did survey respondents feel about the Balanced School Day?**

*Approximately sixty percent of parents agreed that the Balanced School Day was an improvement over the traditional school day. Twenty percent did not agree. Sixteen percent were unsure. The remaining 4% did not respond to the statement.*

*Many teachers (80%) agreed that the Balanced School Day schedule was an improvement over the traditional school day while 18 percent did not agree. Two percent did not respond.*

*Fifty-five percent of students agreed that the Balanced School Day schedule was an improvement over the traditional school day while 34 percent did not agree. Eleven percent were unsure.*

**Question: Which schools in the board are participating in the Balanced Day pilot project?**

*The pilot schools include Eastview PS, Munns PS and Post's Corners PS in Oakville, George Kennedy PS and Park PS in Georgetown, J.M. Denyes PS in Milton, and Ryerson and Pineland in Burlington.*

*These schools represent large and small schools from the North, West and East areas of the Board. They represent French Immersion and English only schools. The pilot schools include schools that are JK to Grade 5, JK to Grade 6, and JK to Grade 8.*

**Question: What will happen next?**

*Over the next month, school administrators and staffs will discuss the benefits, challenges and the implications of the timetable with their school communities. School Councils will be encouraged to discuss the Balanced Day timetable with pilot school councils, principals, teachers and trustees.*

*A staff decision regarding the Balanced Day timetable will be placed on the agenda for the May 7, 2003 Committee of the Whole meeting.*