



Halton District School Board

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The Balanced Day Surveys Report

Executive Summary

Community Relations, Research and Accountability
Halton District School Board

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Overview

In September 2002 an alternate school schedule was implemented at eight elementary schools in the Halton District School Board. The schedule, known as the Balanced Day schedule (BD), provides three 100 minute blocks of instructional time, divided by two nutrition and physical activity breaks, one of 40 and one of 50 minutes. By contrast, the traditional alternative represents a total of 300 minutes of instructional time with two recess breaks of 15 minutes, and one lunch break of up to one hour.

All schools participating in the pilot project are self-selected. They form a unique partnership with a clear mandate of improving student learning and teacher effectiveness through a focus on healthy, active minds and bodies. The eight schools piloting the Balanced Day schedule include, from the north of Halton - Park, George Kennedy, and J. M. Denyes Public Schools, from the east - Munn's, Post's Corners, and Eastview Public Schools, and from the west - Pineland and Ryerson Public Schools. Both large and small schools are represented with student enrollments ranging from 201 to 778 students. The eight pilot schools include two French Immersion sites.

Table 1. Halton District School Board pilot schools

School	Student enrollment	Number of teachers	Grade range	French Immersion	Percentage students eligible for bussing
East					
Eastview	687	27	JK-8		33.92
Munn's	201	8	JK-5		7.96
Post's Corners	762	27	JK-8		24.02
North					
George Kennedy	778	31	JK-5	X	56.04
J. M. Denyes	317	13	JK-5		35.02
Park	357	14	JK-5		34.17
West					
Pineland	688	27	1-8	X	43.17
Ryerson	620	24	JK-6		54.84

A committee, consisting of administrators of the pilot schools, senior board administrators, and resource staff, met on an ongoing basis to monitor progress and address challenges. A request to survey parents, teachers and students of pilot schools was introduced early in 2003. The Research Department was asked to assist the committee by helping to develop surveys to gather aggregated data on parent, teacher and student perceptions about the Balanced Day schedule. The aim of the surveys was to provide a snapshot or portrait of the perceptions of the three groups who were experiencing the Balanced Day schedule during the 2002-2003 school year. Three surveys were developed based on feedback from committee members and pilot studies from other Ontario school boards.

The parent survey was developed as a 'pencil-paper' survey consisting of four sections and a total of 31 closed-response questions. Closed-response questions were used rather than open-response questions, as they tend to produce standardized data that can be analyzed statistically. Responses to closed-response questions have a better chance of being more reliable or consistent. Open-response questions are difficult to compare and interpret and answers must be catalogued and interpreted.

The teacher and student surveys were developed as web-based applications. The teacher survey was made up of two sections consisting of 21 closed-response questions. The student survey was comprised of one section consisting of 11 closed-response questions. The web-survey tool provided tallies of responses to each question.

The surveys were disseminated to the three groups during March 2003. Data analyses were conducted during the last week of March and first week of April 2003.

Selection of Participants

The format of the parent survey was descriptive or observational aimed at describing the perceptions of parents concerning the Balanced Day schedule. The survey was cross-sectional. It provided data at one fixed point in time – seven months after the initiation of the Balanced Day schedule at the eight pilot sites.

All parents of children (grades one to eight) from the pilot school sites were eligible to receive a survey. Stratified random sampling was used. Strata included school site and grade. The sampling procedure ensured that the sample was representative of the population being surveyed. The sample size was approximately 30 percent of the population. As a rule of thumb, a sample size of 30 percent is considered to be appropriate. Thirty percent of the parents of students attending each school and each grade received a survey.

All teachers at the pilot sites and students from grades three to eight at the pilot schools were eligible to complete a survey. Convenience sampling, that is, all teachers, and all students in grades three to eight that were willing and able, were invited to complete the appropriate survey.

Participation Rates

A participation or response rate represents the number or percentage of individuals within the parent, teacher and student groups that responded to the survey. All surveys hope for a high response rate however no single rate is considered the standard. A response rate of 50 percent is considered very good.

One thousand and fourteen surveys were mailed to a randomly selected group of parents representing approximately 30 percent of the target population. Five hundred and twenty-one surveys were returned for analysis. This represents a healthy response rate of 51.38 percent.

Students in grades three to eight from the eight pilot schools were invited to complete a web-based survey. The potential number of student respondents was 2528 and 1070 completed the survey, producing a response rate of 42.3 percent.

Teachers at the eight pilot school sites were also invited to complete a web-based survey. Eighty-two of a possible 171 teachers accepted the invitation, representing a 47.95 percent response rate.

Table 2. Balanced Day Survey Response Rates

Balanced Day Survey Participants			
	Parents <i>Pencil/Paper</i>	Grades 3-8 Students <i>Web-based Survey</i>	Teachers <i>Web-based Survey</i>
Potential Number of Respondents	1014	2528	171
Actual Number of Respondents	521	1070	82
Response Rate	51.38%	42.3%	47.95%

Table 3 indicates that the survey responses from the parents are highly representative of each school proportionately within the group of pilot schools.

Table 3. Actual numbers and percents of eligible parents in each of the eight pilot schools and the actual response rates of parents

School Name	Number of eligible parents	Percentage of Population of 8 Pilot Schools	Actual Response Rate
Eastview	609	16.75%	13.9%
George Kennedy	620	17.06%	19.3%
J.M. Denyes	247	6.80%	7.3%
Munn's	137	3.77%	4.2%
Park	255	7.02%	6.4%
Pineland	693	19.06%	22.5%
Post's Corners	614	16.89%	15.4%
Ryerson	460	12.65%	11.0%
Total Parents	3635	100%	100%

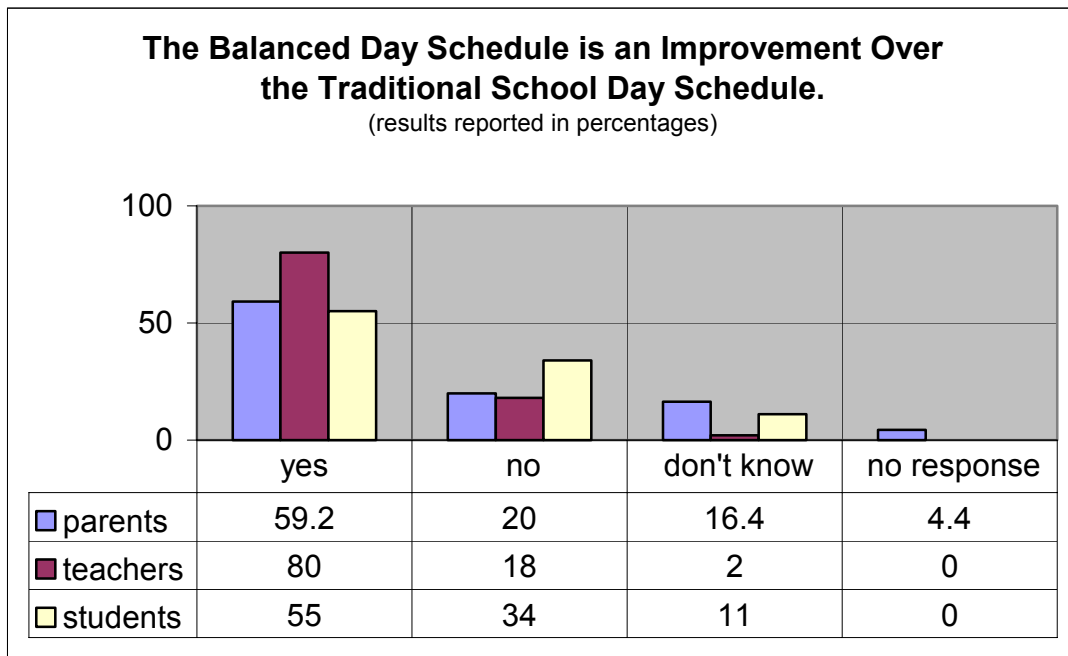
Summary of Major Findings

Parent, teacher and student responses to the major question about the Balanced Day schedule are detailed below. Then, findings from the separate parent, teacher and student surveys are reported.

Each of the three surveys asked the respondents to indicate whether the Balanced Day schedule is an improvement over the traditional alternative. A summary of survey responses to the question is displayed in Table 4. The majority of respondents indicated that the Balanced Day schedule is indeed an improvement, with 80 percent of teachers, 59.2 percent of parents, and 55 percent of students supporting the change.

Those indicating the Balanced Day schedule is not an improvement included 34 percent of students, 20 percent of parents and 18 percent of teachers. Approximately 16 percent of parents and 11 percent of students were undecided. Only 2 percent of teachers were undecided. A summary of findings from the parent, teacher, and student surveys follows.

Table 4. Parent, teacher and student responses comparing the Balanced Day schedule to the traditional alternative.



When parents were asked if changes in: lunchtime routines, all-day absences, communication opportunities with teachers, the amount of food eaten during break, improvements in student ability to cope with the school day, and the level of enthusiasm for school were due to the Balanced Day schedule, they tended to withhold their response or to indicate uncertainty rather than indicate a positive or negative opinion.

The majority of teachers indicated an increase in instructional time, while time lost due to transitions (for example, class changes, entry, exit) decreased. Sixty-eight percent also noted that there was more time or no change in the amount of time for professional collaboration with colleagues compared to previous school years.

Students indicated changes in lunch routines. Overall, 15.84 percent of students reported that they usually went home last year during their lunch break. This year, 8.59 percent of students reported that they go home during their lunch break. This means, of the students who responded to the survey, there was a slight increase in the number of the students staying at school for the lunch break. Eighty-eight percent of the student respondents reported eating all of their food some or all of the time. Forty-seven percent of student survey respondents indicated that they thought that there were more clubs, sports and school activities for students this year. Thirty percent did not know and twenty-three percent disagreed.

Appendix A

Parent Survey Response Rates per Question and Category

Questions	Responses							
	Numbers are expressed in percentages.							
1. In my opinion, the Balanced School Day schedule is an improvement over the traditional school day schedule.	Yes 59.2	No 20.0	Don't Know 16.4	No Response 4.4				
2. Please indicate which elementary school your child attends by placing an 'X' in the appropriate box under the school's name.	Geo. Kennedy 19.3	J. M. Denyes 7.3	Munn's 4.2	Park 6.4	Pine-land 22.5	Post's Crs 15.4	East-view 13.9	Ryer-Son 11.0
3. Please indicate the grade level of the student for whom you are completing this survey by placing an 'X' in the appropriate box.	Grade 1 17.4	2 14.1	3 14.7	4 13.3	5 14.7	6 11.4	7 7.5	8 6.9
4. Please indicate how your child usually travels to and from school.	Walks 42	School Bus 35.5	Car 22.5					
5. Does your child usually come home for lunch?	Yes 4.4	No 95.6						
a) If yes, please indicate during which nutrition/lunch break.	1st break 3.7	2nd break 2.1		No Response 94.2				
6. Do you volunteer at your child's school (e.g. in-class, field trips, parent council, etc)?	Yes 50.5	No 49.5						
a) If yes, how often do you usually volunteer?	Rarely 11.6	Occas 22.9	Freq 21.6	No Response 43.9				
7. Please indicate how many of your children at this school are in the grade divisions listed below.	(JK-SK) 14.7	(Gr. 1-3) 55.8	(Gr. 4-6) 53.6	(Gr. 7-8) 21	*does not add up to 100% since parents might have chn in more than one category			
8. This school year, has your child changed her/his lunchtime routine?	Yes 23.7	No 73.2	Don't Know 3.1					

a) If yes, identify the type of change.	At school	Not at school		No Response				
	14.8	2.2		83				
b) Is this change a result of the Balanced School Day schedule?	Yes	No		No Response				
	18.5	17.7		63.8				
9. This school year, does it take more time to get ready for school?	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response				
	13.1	84.8	1.5	.6				
b) If yes, is this problematic?	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response				
	3.9	13.8	.6	81.7				
c) In what areas are you spending more time?	Food prep	Dressing /clothing	Organ-ization	Arranging Travel	Other	*does not add up to 100% since parents might not be spending more time in any category		
	16	7.9	14.3	2.9	2.5			
10. When it is necessary for your child to be absent for a portion of the school day do you keep him/her home all day	Yes	No		No Response				
	17.5	80.4		2.1				
a) Is this a change from previous school years?	Yes	No		No Response				
	4.1	80.8		15.1				
b) If yes, is this a result of the Balanced School Day schedule?	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response				
	3.7	17.1	1.7	77.5				
11. Compared to previous school years, opportunities to communicate with my child's teacher(s) have	Increased	Decr.	Don't Know	No Response	Same			
	10.6	12.1	2.7	1.0	73.6			
a) Is this the result of the Balanced School Day schedule?	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Response				
	4.6	41.2	19.7	34.5				
12. Compared to previous school years, my child has been absent due to illness...	Less	More		No Response	Same			
	21.2	7.9		1.9	66.3			

13. Compared to previous school years, my child has opportunities for physical activity during the school day	Less 12.3	More 29.6	Don't Know 11.9	No Response 1.3	Same 43.9	NA 1.0		
14. This year my child eats all of her/his food during nutrition/lunch breaks.	Never 6.9	Sometimes 47.8	Don't Know 3.7	No Response .75	Alw 40.1	NA .75		
a) Is this a change?	Yes 32.2	No 62.4		No Response 5.4				
b) If yes, do you feel this is a result of the Balanced School Day schedule?	Yes 27.4	No 9.2	Don't Know 7.7	No Response 55.7				
15. Compared to previous school years, I feel my child's ability to cope with the school day has improved.	Yes 50.3	No 42.4	Don't Know 6.7	No Response .6				
a) Do you feel this is a result of the Balanced School Day schedule?	Yes 31	No 25.2	Don't Know 24.7	No Response 19.1				
16. The Balanced School Day schedule has had an effect on my child's learning.	Yes 27.9	No 32.0	Don't Know 39.1	No Response 1.0				
a) If yes, would you say the effect has been	Positive 23.5	Negative 5.6	Don't Know 7.5	No Response 63.4				
17. My child generally expresses enthusiasm for school.	Yes 80.55	No 15.25	Don't Know 2.1	No Response 2.1				
a) Do you feel this is influenced by the Balanced School Day schedule?	Yes 12.3	No 54.2	Don't Know 28.7	No Response 4.8				

Appendix B

Teacher Survey Response Rates per Question and Category

Questions	Responses								
	(numbers are expressed in percentages)								
1. In my opinion, the Balanced School Day schedule is an improvement over the traditional school day schedule.	Yes 79.27	No 18.29	Dn't Kw 2.44						
2. My major teaching responsibility is in the following area	Clstrm 62.19	Music 1.22	Fr Im E 6.10	Fr Im Fr 4.88	Cr Fr 2.44	Itin 0.00	ESL/SPED 15.85	NA 7.32	
3. I have teaching responsibilities at the following levels	K 4.88	J 15.85	P & J 18.29		P 24.39	I 13.41	J & I 9.76	P, J & I 7.32	NA 6.10
4. I have taught for	0-2 Yrs 7.32	3-5 Yrs 15.85	6-10 Yrs 14.63	10+ Yrs 57.32	NA 4.88				
5. I work at a school that offers Quality daily Fitness.	Yes 71.60	No 28.40							
6. Compared to previous school years, the time I have to meet/plan with other teachers during the school day is	Less 20.99	More 30.86	No Chg 37.04	NA 11.11					
7. The change in meeting/planning time is the result of the Balanced School Day schedule.	Yes 33.33	No 24.70	Dn't Kw 16.05	NA 25.92					
8. The structure of the Balanced School Day allows me to better manage my time, resources and responsibilities.	Yes 77.78	No 9.88	No Chg 11.11	Dn't Kw 1.23	NA 0.00				
9. Compared to previous school years, opportunities to take care of my personal needs (e.g. eat lunch, washroom breaks) during the school day have	Incr 54.32	Decr 23.46	No Chg 18.52	Dn't Kw 2.47	NA 1.23				
10. The change in opportunities to take care of my personal needs is the result of the Balanced School Day schedule.	Yes 54.32	No 20.99	No Chg 16.05	Dn't Kw 3.70	NA 4.94				

11. In my opinion, I have sufficient opportunities to communicate with parents/guardians.	Yes 72.85	No 19.75	Dn't Kw 1.23	NA 6.17					
12. Opportunities to communicate with parents/guardians is the result of the Balanced School Day schedule.	Yes 29.63	No 49.38	Dn't Kw 8.64	NA 12.35					
13. Compared to previous years, I think the amount of time spent by students preparing for entry/exit, lunch routines, class transitions, etc. has	Incr 8.86	Decr 67.09	No Chg 17.72	Dn't Kw 6.33	NA 0.00				
14. Compared to previous years, I feel instruction/learning time has	Incr 65.82	Decr 6.33	No Chg 21.52	Dn't Kw 6.33	NA 0.00				
15. Based on my observations, optimal learning time for students occurs during the	1st 21.52	2nd 5.06	3rd 0.00	1st & 2nd 58.23	2nd & 3rd 2.53	1st & 3rd 5.06	No Dif 7.60		
16. During the school week, I am responsible for supervision of children while they eat their food during nutrition break.	Yes 74.68	No 25.32							
17. Would you say most children eat	All Fd 13.92	Most Fd 73.42	Little Fd 2.53	None Fd 0.00	NA 10.13				
18. Is this a change from previous years?	Yes 34.18	No 29.11	Dn't Kw 25.32	NA 11.39					
19. Is this a result of the Balanced School Day schedule?	Yes 34.18	No 22.78	Dn't Kw 27.85	NA 15.19					
20. Compared to previous school years, I think students' abilities to cope with the school day have improved.	Yes 56.96	No 18.99	Dn't Kw 20.25	NA 3.80					
21. The change in students' abilities to cope with the school day is the result of the Balanced School Day schedule.	Yes 55.26	No 15.79	Dn't Kw 22.37	NA 6.58					

Appendix C

Student Survey Response Rates per Question and Category

Questions	Student Responses						
	(numbers are expressed in percentages)						
1. I think the school schedule is better than last year's schedule.	Yes 54.86	No 33.64	Don't Know 11.50				
2. I usually get to school by	School Bus 25.54	Car 33.27	Walk/Other 41.19				
3. Last year I usually went home for lunch.	Yes 15.84	No 84.16					
4. This year I usually go home for lunch.	Yes 8.59	No 91.41					
5. I have enough time to get ready for school in the morning.	Yes 68.84	No 31.16					
6. Compared to last year, I think there are more clubs, sports and school activities for students.	Yes 46.65	No 23.33	Don't Know 30.02				
7. I participate in a Quality Daily Fitness (QDF) program at my school.	Yes 59.90	No 27.10	Don't Know 13.00				
8. I eat all of my lunch during nutrition/lunch breaks.	Never 11.89	Smtimes 54.01	Always 34.10				
9. I think I do my best learning during...	1st Lring Blk 8.16	2nd Lring Blk 15.42	3rd Lring Blk 9.75	1st & 2nd 5.77	1st & 3rd 9.45	2nd & 3rd 2.79	No Dif 48.66

Resources

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