

Interlake School Division Balanced School Day

The rationale behind the Balanced School Day is that it will improve academic achievement by increasing time-on task in the classroom setting. The Balanced School Day schedule divides the school day into three 100-minute blocks of instructional time. Two longer nutrition and activity breaks are provided in the morning and afternoon instead of the traditional mid morning/mid afternoon recess and noon hour lunch. This schedule creates equally balanced teaching/learning blocks in the school day. The two nutrition/activity breaks of 40-55 minutes allow time for eating and activity in both the morning and afternoon. Nutrition breaks provide 20-25 minutes for eating and 20-30 minutes for activity.

The benefits of the Balanced School Day are three-fold: Academic, Nutrition and

Physical Activity.

Academic

- More instruction time with less interruptions allows teaching and learning to occur at an optimum level
- Longer lessons to continue without interruption (literacy blocks, science classes and art classes)
- Time to program reading, writing and oral activities in a more integrated way; allows teachers to be flexible with programming

Nutrition

- Research indicates that children need frequent food breaks during the day
- Schedule provides two opportunities for students to consume nutritious food rather than eating on the run at recess
- Students who are nutritionally satisfied can concentrate better and more effectively

Physical Activity

- Allows students two opportunities of 20-25 a day of uninterrupted play
- Quality exercise time energizes students, helps them to concentrate on school work and promotes a healthy lifestyle
- Introduction of physical education initiative, which includes daily activities for middle years' students during first activity period.
- Opportunities for middle years' students to mentor younger students in activities

Interlake School Division Trustee, Sharon Baker, attended The Canadian School Board

Conference in Toronto in July 2004. Her interest was peaked by a session on the Balanced School Day offered by the Halton School District in Southern Ontario. Following the conference Sharon shared her excitement for the Balanced School Day with her fellow trustees.

In February 2005, Ross Metcalfe, Assistant Superintendent and administrators from the school division attended a presentation by Sheryl Hoshizaki at the annual Council of School Leaders Conference in Winnipeg. Over the next few months senior administration, trustees and administrators continued to discuss the merits of the Balanced School Day. Five schools from the division expressed interest in pursuing further details of the balanced school day structure.

In November 2005 the Education Committee of the Interlake School Division chose Brant-Argyle and Warren Elementary Schools to pilot the Balanced School Day. A delegation traveled to Kenora, Ontario, in January 2006 to visit two schools, which had implemented the Balanced School Day. Upon return the Board extended the pilot in all five interested schools: Balmoral School, Brant-Argyle School, Rosser School, Stony Mountain School and Warren Elementary. Deliberations began with school personnel and communities in preparation for the introduction of the Balanced School Day with the goal of providing consistent information to all five communities.

Senior Administration applied to the Minister of Education to pilot the Balanced School Day during the 2006/2007 school year and received approval in April 2006. In September 2006 the five schools instituted the first balanced day structure in the Province of Manitoba.

Feedback of the Balanced Day will be provided by surveys from all stakeholders, during the month of February. Parents, staff and students will provide input and data will be shared with the Interlake Trustees in April 2007 to determine the status of the pilot.

The Interlake School Board took the initial steps to investigate the Balanced School Day. The cost of implementing the initiative has been minimal for the Board. The School Board supported the overnight trip to Kenora. Once the pilot began the Board provided release time for administrators to share and discuss the initiative. This release time has provided invaluable networking for those involved.

Interlake School Division has received interest from a number of media outlets to initially investigate the Balanced School Day and to do follow up reports throughout the year. Several schools throughout the province have also expressed interest. The division staff is willing to share the data they have collected with those interested.