

Extended Day Pilot Proposal

Schools around the country have seen success in improving student achievement in high-poverty districts with an Extended Day approach, and the Board should spend more time considering such a proposal for Barnes/Wheeler. A program centered upon an extended school day has the benefit of focusing on instruction time rather than shuffling students around, gives students access to an enhanced curriculum within the District, and would allow parents to choose a learning environment that should be attractive to families throughout Burlington, all without redistricting or enormous new building costs.

Burlington does not need to choose an official school day that concludes at 2:30 each day.

Characteristics and Benefits of Extended Day Pilot Program

An Extended Day Program, as tried out in cities such as Cambridge and Fall River, Massachusetts, allows for more advanced learning opportunities without shorting the basics or requiring redistricting. When Dovetail was first offered at Edmunds, it pulled students from across the city in part because it was the only opportunity for full-day Kindergarten, and an Extended Day program would have a similar draw for non-neighborhood families. For those interested in promoting SEI, this provides the "carrot" rather than the "stick" associated with arbitrary redistricting based on family income.

Top Ten Reasons Board Should Consider Extended Day

- 1. Additional instruction time:** Students in need of remedial help or more advanced challenges would all benefit from increased class time;
- 2. Reduce after-school care costs:** No fees for longer days, 7:30-4:15 or similar, would ease parent worries/costs for after-school care and save families money;
- 3. Redistricting becomes unnecessary:** Maintains core of neighborhood/community school;
- 4. Phys.Ed.** Longer days allow for more time for daily phys. ed. that could also include school sports teams, promoting increased activity levels and fitness;
- 5. Foreign Languages:** Opportunity for enrichment classes such as foreign language to begin in early elementary grades;
- 6. Flex-Time for Teachers:** Staff are together for core teaching times in middle of day but allows some flexibility in hours to cover longer day;
- 7. Arts:** Expansion of band, orchestra and choral music to elementary school, more time for theatre or integration with City Arts;
- 8. Partnerships:** Existing enrichment activities can be incorporated into the afternoon by partnering with The Flynn, Shelburne Farms, and UVM;
- 9. Flexible Instruction Time:** Longer days allow for block scheduling, more field trips or time for in-depth studies;
- 10. Better Use of Facilities:** Rather than building new schools, we would get more use from existing facilities, giving Burlington a better return on its fixed costs. There is no need to spend more to buy more "bricks and mortar".

The Boston Globe's Sunday Magazine (*Saved by the (Later) Bell*, April 29, 2007) had an article about the effects of an Extended Day Program, and how well received it was by both teachers, students, and parents in some of the Massachusetts schools. An article in the NY Times highlighted the same issues in a March 26, 2007 article entitled *Failing Schools See a Solution in Longer Days*. Many studies and pilot programs are underway, and we can benefit from this research in implementing our own version. A good start for current research is the material collected by *Massachusetts 2020* at <http://www.mass2020.org/research.html>.

Extended Day Program is Consistent with Goals of Excellence and Equity and Maintains Neighborhood Schools

This was an option that the Board identified early on as a possible approach to improving schools, one deserving of more thought, and which could be tested for a limited period.

Students in need of help would have more time in school, students and families seeking a new challenge (foreign language, exploratory science) who live outside the immediate neighborhood would be able to transfer in, and Burlington would be maintaining neighborhood schools while encouraging choice: creating a unique educational option otherwise totally unavailable in city schools. Extended Day will allow all students to be challenged and excited, whatever their family income or academic level.

An approach based on "Extended Day" preserves the principle of choice and a sense of community that benefits all students at the school. Given a choice, students from other areas of city could enter the program, while those not interested in the new schedule, for whatever reason, could always seek to variance out of the school to a shorter day/traditional school. The results of the pilot should be quickly apparent based on school choice and test results.

Finally, although SEI should not need to be the driving goal of our schools system, having an Extended Day at Barnes/Wheeler would likely attract students and families from outside the neighborhood in the same manner that Dovetail once brought students from throughout the city to Edmunds.

Prudent and Responsible

If for some reason the results don't pan out as expected, or the costs are too high, we would not have spent years and millions investing in new school buildings, nor would we have ripped at our community neighborhoods by redistricting children to more distant schools or duplicate essential services throughout the system when they may be better grouped where they can have the biggest impact. Nor would this approach necessarily be dependent on adoption of a particular magnet approach that might not prove to benefit the students most in need of extra help and assistance.

Burlington has many reasons to be proud of its schools and neighborhoods, and we should be cautious about the unintended consequences that may well leave parents, students and the City worse off. With the focus rightfully on improving achievement in our schools, the Board should think outside the box represented by the traditional school day and seriously consider a pilot program or magnet option that includes expanded instruction time.

Respectfully Submitted,

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