

Time Spent in School: Too much? Not enough?

Do you think your child spends too little time in school? What is too much time in school? Can more time in school close the achievement gap found between students of different economic status, races or geographic locations?

What does the research say? The August 2012 report, [Expanding Time for Learning Both Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Review of the Evidence Base](#) reviews recent research on extended school day programs, extended school year programs, and extended learning opportunities outside of school. Overall the authors recommend further research, but note that the evidence suggests that extended learning time programs, including Extended School Day, Extended School Year, and expanded learning opportunities outside of school can be effective in improving educational outcomes for students.¹ Please read the entire report for a more complete picture, but here are some of the additional findings:

- **Extended School Day** – Referencing 6.5 hours as the typical school day, one study reviewed determined that the relationship between school time and achievement is positive when days are somewhat longer than this average, but that it is negative in schools with either very short or very long days.² Extended School Day programs appear to be the most beneficial to students at high-risk academically.³
- **Full Day Kindergarten** is indicated as having a positive effect on the acquisition of reading and math knowledge during the kindergarten year.⁴ There were strong academic outcomes when Full Day Kindergarten involved high proportions of minority students.⁵ However, none of the studies that they reviewed found there to be a significant, positive impact of Full Day Kindergarten beyond the first grade.⁶ In this regard, the authors indicate that research suggests a few possible answers, with one being that summer learning loss with the lack of cognitive stimulation available outside of school as a reason for the diminishing effects of Full Day Kindergarten.⁷
- **Extended School Year** – This portion of the paper focused on schools that operated for more than 180 days. Most of the studies showed that Extended School Year programs in general had a positive effect on academic achievements (as measured by test scores) and on the students' attendance.⁸ Two studies suggested that Extended School Year environments may be more effective when they make use of interim breaks to target those students who most need extra academic help.⁹ Comparative analyses used in a study of 14 school districts in Michigan found that extended year round education is more effective in

¹ [Expanding Time for Learning Both Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Review of the Evidence Base](#), by Zakia Redd, Christopher Boccanfuso, Karen Walker, Daniel Princiotta, Dylan Knewstubb, and Kristin Moore, August 2012, page 64

² *op. cit.*, pages 23-24

³ *ibid*, page 24

⁴ *ibid*, page 26

⁵ *ibid*, page 29

⁶ *ibid*, pages 27-28

⁷ *ibid*, page 28

⁸ *ibid*, page 33

⁹ *ibid*, pages 34, 37-38

improving achievement in school than the extended traditional calendar programs, including improved retention skills over the summer.¹⁰

The authors recommend additional research on a number of items, including: those that focus on the unique effect of the longer school day or longer school year over other school features and reform efforts¹¹; and those that examine the effectiveness of extended school day programs at educational outcomes other than standardized test scores.¹²

Again, please review the entire report which reviews an enormous amount of research that the bulletin space doesn't permit us to detail further.

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¹⁰ *Ibid*, pages 37-38

¹¹ *Ibid*, page 65

¹² *Ibid*, page 32

