

Balanced School Day
by
Carman Elementary School (April/11)

Description of Balanced School Day

We are always looking for effective ways to enhance our school's learning environment. The Balanced School Day (BSD) schedule, an alternative to the traditional schedule, reframes the school day by eliminating recess and noon-hour lunch breaks and providing two longer nutrition/activity breaks during the day. The BSD schedule, as displayed below, consists of three- 100 minute blocks of instructional time, separated by two nutrition/activity breaks. These breaks are normally 40-45 minutes in length; 20 minutes is allotted for healthy eating and 20 minutes for activity time. The breaks are followed by 5 minutes for entry or transition time.

Benefits of Changing to a Balanced School Day

1. **Balanced Nutrition** - research has shown that children need frequent nutrition breaks and the BSD schedule provides two opportunities during the school day when students sit down to eat rather than eat on the run at recess. Students who are nutritionally satisfied can concentrate and learn more effectively.
2. **Academic Performance** - studies on brain compatibility support a balance of learning, physical activity and nutrition throughout a school day. Schools which have implemented a Balanced School Day find that students are better able to stay focused on their work and don't run out of energy toward the end of the school day.
3. **Physical Activity** - at a time when physical inactivity and obesity are of increasing concern for school-age children, the BSD schedule gives students two opportunities every day to take part in 20-25 minutes of uninterrupted activity, plus their regular phys-ed class of 33 minutes every other day. This quality exercise time energizes students, helps them concentrate on their school work and promotes a healthy lifestyle.
4. **More Time for Learning** - to maximize learning for students the BSD schedule provides three blocks of teaching/learning time without interruption. Under the old schedule, the a.m. and p.m. recess breaks resulted in at least 5-10 extra minutes of dressing & washroom time.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. Why did you make this change?

A. The Balanced School Day is organized so there are longer periods of uninterrupted teaching/learning blocks; it features a more consistent, effective nutrition/activity & academic balance for students resulting in increased concentration and energy.

Q. How will two longer breaks help students in the classroom?

A. To learn properly, students need to eat and be energized. The BSD schedule ensures that students have an opportunity to eat/snack during the day and still take part in physical activity. A student nutritionally satisfied and physically healthy has better concentration levels, more focus and energy. All of these help a child to learn better.

Q. When will my child eat lunch?

A. The students will have two breaks each day. The breaks are divided into a time for eating and a time for physical activity. The students will eat at both breaks.

Q. Can my child still come home for lunch?

A. We will designate the second break (1:00-2:00 p.m.) as the "go-home" break for students living close to the school and wishing to go home.

Q. What if my child eats all their lunch during the morning break and has nothing left to eat at the second break?

A. Parents can send a lunch and snack in two different containers or mark the foods according to which break they are to be eaten. Students may need help deciding what to eat and when until they become accustomed to the new school day. Both parents and teachers will need to work with students during the adjustment phase.