

My name is Shawn Leaver and I'm a 6th grade teacher at Hilltop Elementary School. I love this school district. I received my education in this district, I teach in this district, and my children are educated in this district. I am not here as a bargaining tactic. I am here to express my concern to the board of education that considering changes to the length of our day, needs to be done with careful planning and collaboration because the success of our students depends on it.

A typical day for a student in an elementary school is packed full. In order to fit in everything that needs to be taught, the only breaks they get, except for lunch, are one minute transition times between activities. There is little time in the classroom for activities that help build a healthy learning community or help kids who need emotional support for one reason or another.

My typical week involves planning for Math lessons, Words Their Way, Tier 2 vocabulary, shared reading and read alouds, 4 guided reading groups, Writing instruction, grammar and convention lessons, Social Studies, Science, and RTI instruction. When adding in all the lessons for small groups, this adds up to over 15 lesson plans a day. Quality planning takes a lot of time because it includes referencing countless resources, reflecting over classroom assessments to help guide instruction, and much more. Adding to this time is the fact that we are constantly learning new curriculum. In my 13 years of teaching we have had a new or added reading program every 2.5 years.

Assessment adds to the amount of time it takes to do our jobs well. We were given a new report card in August. It has changed what we assess, how we assess it, and how we record it. There has been almost no guidance or instruction on this assessment tool. We are doing what we do so well, adapting as we go.

A common frustration is that there isn't enough hours in a 24 hour day to do all that we need to effectively. So yes, we are concerned what adding more time means. What would extra time in a day be? More time for teachers to plan, assess, and collaborate? More data analysis? Down time for students, so they don't have to be "on" nonstop throughout the day? More content to teach to the students? Extra time for the arts and PE? Each of these options could have affects on student learning that may not be anticipated without careful thought and planning. For instance, adding time to student contact could be a good idea, but how will adjustments be made so teachers can plan effectively for the added time when we are having trouble keeping up with the current schedule. Poorly planned time is not in the best interest of our students. Can young children effectively learn with a longer day unless a more conscious effort is made to give them more breaks? It is already noticeable that students are less focused in the afternoon than in the morning.

Just because we question what extra time in the day would be used for, does not mean we are thinking of ourselves above our students. We can question policy because no one sees how district policy affects student learning more directly than we do in the classroom. We can question policy *because* we have the best interest of our students in mind. I have never forgotten for even a moment that just as I entrust my children to our school district, other parents entrust their children to me. It is with great pride and honor that I take on that responsibility.