

May 15, 2012

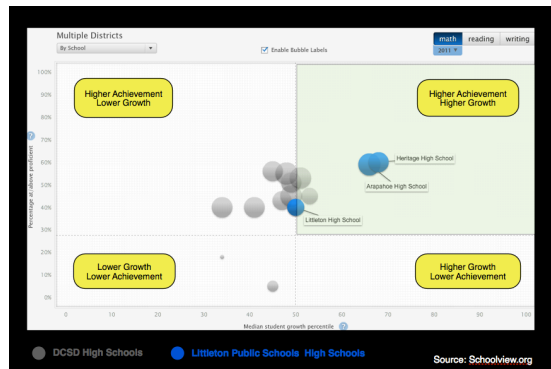
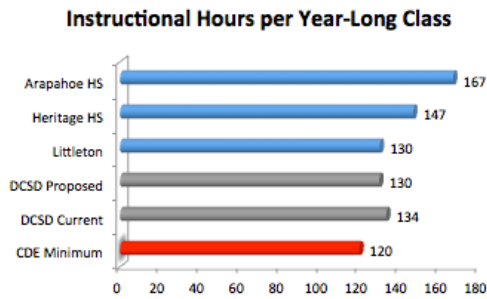
Dear DCSD Board Directors,

I am here tonight to speak on behalf of the Strong Schools Coalition. As presented in the last school board meeting, the impending change to the high school schedule next year will reduce the instructional minutes for students and the advisement time offered to students. The Strong Schools Coalition is concerned about the anticipated impact this change will have on learning.

As high school math achievement scores have been an area of concern expressed by the Board of Education, we are interested in knowing specifically how the move to a block schedule may impact student learning in math.

According to the Littleton Public Schools (LPS) bell schedules, two of the LPS high schools seem to offer significantly more instructional hours when compared against DCSD. In fact, Arapahoe High School's schedule indicates students will receive 22% more instructional time than their Douglas County peers. Littleton teachers also have an additional class period available to offer assistance to students outside of class time.

As you can see from this graph, the math achievement scores for the two LPS schools that provide more instructional and advisement time are worth noting and warrant further investigation.

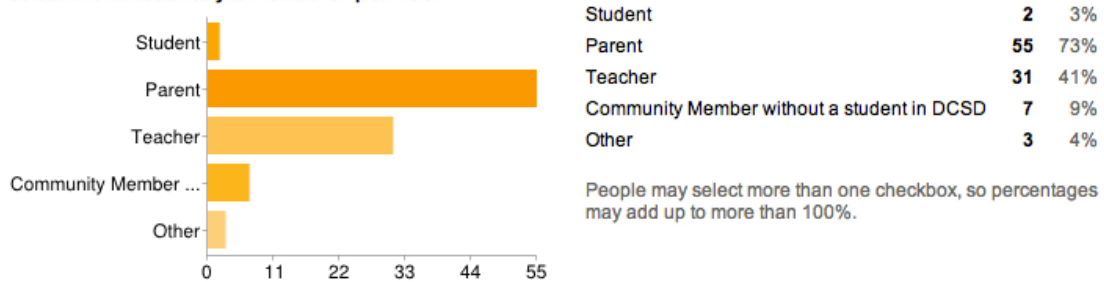


Of the more than 75 individuals who have shared their opinions on the high school scheduling change, 89% are not supportive. We respectfully submit copies of their comments for your review.

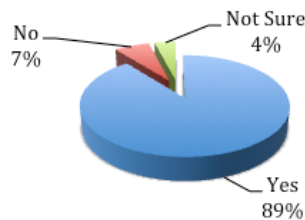
The Coalition asks the school board to research the potential impact of a reduction of instructional hours on math achievement and to collaborate with high school principals, teachers, and parents to determine the need for additional resources to support student success.

Survey regarding Proposed Changes to the High School Schedule

Select all that describe your relationship to DCSD



Supportive of Change to High School Schedule



Comments Submitted by Community members, including Parents, Teachers, Students, and Community Members without Children in DCSD School

Are you supportive of this change?

Why or why not?

- | | |
|-----|---|
| Yes | I like the block schedule. It is fairer to elementary teachers who are now teaching 30+ students and all subject areas. |
| No | I don't believe that the cuts are necessary given the \$66 million dollars sitting in the reserve fund. I think the BOE is not being good stewards of the district. |
| No | Teachers are already overloaded and this just makes it even harder for them to address individualized needs. But most importantly, it's less instruction time for students and it's clear the district has the funds to prevent these cuts. |

No I do not like the fact that my daughter will be limited in the number of classes she can take.

No Teachers are being asked to take on quite a bit of extra work while the district acts like no one is affected negatively by this. Teachers' planning time will be DECREASED while at the same time their workload is significantly INCREASED.

For students, the total instructional time they get with their teachers is DECREASED as well.

The big emphasis on reduced class size is nonsense. 80 HS teachers were fired across the district, which greatly reduced the impact that the extra class for those teachers that are left could have on class size. A large portion of the extra sections is just going to make up for the teachers that were let go - NOT for reducing class sizes!!!

This is a LOSE-LOSE for teachers and students (and by extension, parents as well). The only ones who benefit are the BOE members looking to continue increasing their financial bottom line without regard to whom they hurt.

Yes

No You're decreasing EVERYTHING, including teaching time? You're kidding me.
As the schools get more crowded, students will need a longer amount of passing time.
Advisement may also be the only time a student may have particular attention given to them about how they are doing in school.

Yes

It is helping to keep class sizes down and course selection from being cut more than it already has been.

No

1. Students will not be able to take a full schedule. Seniors will, essentially, be half time students.
2. Teacher workloads will SIGNIFICANTLY increase, despite what the central administration says.
3. Students will be unsupervised during large stretches of the day.
4. Access/SOAR/help time will be reduced to a point where it won't even be helpful. How can a kid make up a test or lab in 20 minutes?
5. Teachers were NOT given an opportunity for input on how teaching six classes would impact students.
6. This will do NOTHING to reduce class sizes. Teachers who weren't fired are picking up the sections of teachers who were. Overall sections will not significantly change.
7. We are spending \$5 million on software while all of this is going on.

No

The decrease in "advising" time really bothers me. In addition, I question if given the better budget picture we even need this change. One on One time with teachers is vitally important to the success of all students.

No

The advisement time is taking a big hit, which is detrimental to the success of students. Kids need time for one on one assistance - to get caught up after being ill (take a test or just go over the material that was missed), to get extra help with something they didn't grasp in class... Teachers need time to prepare for classes, especially when they have to prepare an extra lesson plan. Every class will not move at the same pace, so they need to make adjustments. It's not as simple as teaching the same class 6 times instead of 5 times!

No

Less instructional time, more students.

No

I lost my job over it!

No

No

- No Block scheduling everyday is not beneficial to the learning environment for the students. Too long to maintain focus and concentration. Additional demands on teachers with increased student numbers will decrease individual differentiation and student relationships.
- No
- No The reduction in instructional minutes is being grossly underestimated... the reduction in class sizes is no more than "spin" - class sizes are not going to be reduced significantly... one or two students is NOT significant... increased student loads reduces the amount of time teachers can spend with each student... this was a way to save money by reducing certified staff - it is going to hurt students, not help them... it is a shame that a district that has enjoyed such a good relationship between the district, the union, and the board for so many years is not being damaged by a board who clearly does not value teachers or education - or students!
- No The teachers are not being compensated for the extra duty.
- No Because, as a former teacher, one plan period (even if it's in the contract) is not a realistic time period to accomplish all that needs to be done. Planning, grading, meeting, collaborating, evaluations, common assessments, etc...It was impossible to get done in 2 plan periods, let alone one. Two things will happen (1) teachers will have to do it on their personal time - weekends, evenings - which will lead to burnout, teacher turnover, lack of continuity; (2) teachers will be unable to be as innovative as they wish because of the time constraints.
- I fully understand this dilemma, but AGAIN, the teachers are taking the brunt of the changes. In the end, children and their optimal learning environment will be affected...negatively. Just because the class sizes are smaller will not compensate for the lack of time to plan, let alone properly assess learning.

Yes As a retired teacher, I support the idea to have a teacher teach an additional class period and reduce class size. Having one planning period per day for planning and conferencing is also a good decision. The teacher should NOT be required to use that time dedicated for planning and conferencing for district or building leadership planned professional development. The planning and conference time needs to be for teacher/student preparation to increase performance for both.

No Turn off fox news

No This creating a "better quality of life" for teachers and decreasing teacher workload definitely does not add up. Any staff reduction increases workload for those remaining. Teachers remaining will teach an extra class to compensate for less staff. This will NOT diminish class size and will increase the number of students each teacher will have to teach. A teacher presently teaching 135-150 students will now have 165-180 students that he/she will be responsible in the course of a day. That is 30 more papers, tests, parent etc. that teacher has to communicate with, prepare lessons for, and teach. That would be comparable to a business manager being directly responsible for 180 employees that he/ she alone would have to write 180 quarterly reviews. There is not that much time in one day.

Would you have 100% faith in doctor who hasn't had a raise in several years and was being forced to see 150 patients per day? I doubt it.

Second, the decrease in the number of classes sophomores-seniors will be allowed to take will have a direct affect on college acceptances - at least to those colleges/universities that count. Having worked at a major university this type of scheduling will put these students at a disadvantage when compared to students from other districts who have been offered the best choices. This will also affect scholarships and college funding. How is a student supposed to explain that he/she wanted to take other classes but the county wouldn't allow it. That type of thing depreciates the excellent (at present) education that was once being offered in a district and can devalue in

the eyes of colleges/universities the education offered in that district. Aren't schools supposed to be in this for education?

Third, who is going to monitor the 300 - 700 students with no place to go? Even though students have off campus privileges who is monitoring what they are doing and where? I would not be the least bit happy if I had a student in this situation and am not happy about my grandson being in this situation.

These things are NOT putting students first. I don't care how it's spun by the board, it is NOT putting the students' or teachers' best interest first. There are many highly educated, talented teachers in the Douglas County school district who are presently not respected for the amazing things they are doing for their students and this district.

Wake up - education and school is all about the children and the teachers who teach them. Parents please speak out. This is YOUR child's future that is being destroyed.

No

I don't believe this change will benefit my student. I understand that teachers are teaching more classes students get less instruction time per class. How can this possibly be beneficial for our students? I am considering open enrolling my student in Littleton Public Schools where the Board of Education understands the needs of students and makes that a priority.

- No Despite what this presentation says, the effect of this will NOT be a reduction in class sizes. Adding an additional 30+ students to a high school teacher's workload means less time for each student all around--the quality of instruction I am able to provide will necessarily be declining with less time! Additionally, one point that I don't believe is emphasized enough is that there will be fewer instructional minutes per class. This will especially hurt students in AP classes.
- No Shorter classes won't improve what students learn in their classes.
- No This is not a solution to large class sizes. The teacher load is the issue regarding student/ teacher contact.
- No Nowhere in this presentation does it discuss how this schedule impacts teachers. Because of added sections, most teachers are adding preps (courses) to their schedules. This takes a lot more planning time because teachers are teaching different classes and levels It is also difficult to add another class of students during a school day. Just the transitions from class to class take time and energy and adding another one with another group of students needs to be accounted for. I know of almost no high school teachers who want this change. In the presentation when it says that "teachers asked for 6 of 8", I believe that they are referring to the choice of 6 of 7 or 6 of 8. The statement in that slide is very misleading. The contract does only "guarantee 1 plan period per day but I have been teaching for 18 years and have always had 2 plan periods. Every district in the Metro area also gives 2 plan periods. It is the norm. High Schools teachers have seen their class loads rise from 150 to 180 and now they have to teach an extra class and class sizes will only decrease by about 3-4 students on average per class. The classes with "45" students was high end and not the norm. The bottom line is that this is the best way for the district to save money and to cut teachers. 6 of 8 means fewer teachers teaching more sections. It has nothing to do with better instruction, better schools or anything else they are presenting.

No The 6/8 schedule is a smoke and mirrors concept to placate parents regarding class size. The bigger picture is each teacher will teach an extra class within the same school day making each class shorter.

No What steps will be taken to insure teachers have a planning period everyday, not every other day or even 2 on one day?

What about all the classes that have been cancelled or increased in size because of reduction of teachers? What about all the kids who can't take a full schedule--how is that helping them? It doesn't! They are trying to spin this in a positive way, but there are too many students who will not get what they need for college prep.

What about kids that fail classes and have to take them again? How does that fit into this model? Will they be able to take those classes?

Admin needs to stop saying the teachers approved this. That is not how it happened! Teachers were told by their principals this was the plan and no input was asked of teachers. Where is the plan to compensate teachers for the increased workload?

No Done for budget, not based on educational research.

No Reduction of instructional time is unwise. Adds work to teachers.

No Echoing all of the comments already posted, this new plan does NOTHING positive for teachers, students or administration! No need to repeat what others have already voiced...this plan is doomed to fail:((

- No This keeps being touted as a way to reduce class sizes. Reducing from 32 to 30 in a class is not a noticeable impact. High school teachers will now have a student load of 180 students (compared to 150), this will significant impact their ability to meet individual students needs, provide timely feedback, communicate with parents, or do things we are used to our teachers doing.
- No More work for teachers, less instructional time, less feedback for students, quality in education will decrease, less choices for students
- No Studies in Canada and Texas have shown block schedules to be less effective in learning/
- No
- No Total student load is just as important, or possibly more important, than class size. There will be an increased burden on teachers of classes that require a lot of writing. Will we see a reduction in the number of writing assignments for students simply because the teachers can't handle the large student loads? Finally, did the teachers choose a 1% pay increase over high school reductions? Where was their input in this decision?
- No 1) 20% more students per teacher, approximately 17% less pay per student...in essence, work more, earn less.
=TEACHER BURN-OUT
2) Less instructional time over year= less knowledge for the student, less prepared for CSAP (or whatever it's called this year or next)/ACT/SAT
- No It does the following: reduces contact time with the students, it frees up maybe four or five students per class at the expense of four or five FTE? Is this all about dollars and cents, or the students' education?
- No
- No
- No This is so clearly bad for kids. It is clearer and clearer to me everyday that this school board does not care about our

kids or our teachers.

- No This decision is not based on what is best for students, but driven by budget decisions. The district's priorities need to be directed at what is best for students. Don't make cuts to the schools.
- No As an elementary school teacher, I would never want students' best interest compromised so that high school teachers had less planning time and it would be "more fair." What is fair is that we are doing our best for each and every student. Please do not cut the planning time and increase the caseload for these teachers. Rework the budget and stop this from happening.
- No Am I reading the graph correctly? Students are to have about the same amount of class time, inhale their lunch, run to their next class, and carry home an even heavier backpack due to less advisement time?
- No Students need to have full schedules.
- No WHAT ABOUT THE STUDENTS? When is the board going to start thinking about them?
- No I really have a problem with the cuts all being put on the back of the high school teachers. Increasing their workload will do nothing good for the teachers or the students. As someone else said, it is just smoke and mirrors, but this school board is second to none when it comes to that.
- No Class periods are too long.
- No Others have stated the case well. The BoE needs to listen to research, parents, teachers and those that care about our students' success.

- Not sure I am concerned this will become the new normal for our high schools instead of ever trying to get back to the opportunities when we had proper funding and support from the community. I am worried that the BoE is so focused on managing the budget that they are not trying to find ways of communicating the importance of new funding for the district.
- No These slides do not appear to reflect any reduction in student options. My understanding from parents w/High School students at Chaparral, CV, and Legend is that students will have fewer choices. Chaparral Freshman may no longer take 8 classes; They will be limited to 7. A "fantasy" genre English class that sparked enthusiasm for writing in reluctant writers is slated to be cut next year. Students at Legend will no longer qualify for "Highly Selective Colleges" because they will be unable to take the sufficient credits without signing up for additional classes through alternative sources. Castle View freshman have fewer elective choices next year. In a county considered to be one of the most affluent in America, how can this be justified? How does this qualify as a "world class education"?
- No It is too much loss of instructional time. At PHS students will lose 25 minutes a week in each of their classes. That is 200 minutes a month. I'm not sure where the 3.6 hours per credit came from. That is certainly not the case at PHS.
- No
- No Passing time = bathroom time. Reducing passing time without requiring teachers to allow bathroom breaks is unhealthy for the kids.

No I find it appalling that this board continues its attempts to mislead the public, in order to make themselves look better. These changes are not reducing class sizes. They are keeping them relatively constant, after massive layoffs of high school teachers. IF our budget crisis is so severe that these layoffs were necessary, be up front with the public about it. Tell us exactly what is going on and why creating over-loaded, over-worked teachers is the better alternative for our students. Don't hide behind the smoke and mirrors and pretend that class sizes will be going down, when in fact, they are not.

No Any proposal which increases class size and / or decreases class room instruction time, I am opposed to. Studies have shown either one or both of these combined seriously impacts the effectiveness of instruction, learning, and waters down the teacher's ability to teach to each student's needs.

No

No It will not lower class size and hurt my children who are there now!

Not sure

Not sure What data support this change? Why is the change not producing more instructional time? Was that the goal of the change?

No

No Students need to be in class!

No I am not supportive of this change for several reasons: it increases a teachers workload and decreases their planning time. All teachers in DCSD get 2 planning periods, the students will have less class time and then what do they do?

I have struggled with this board and superidentent all along. How about focusing on the teachers and students, get serious about getting community support for a bond/mill levy, and stop trying to use creative language to make it look okay.

Even one of the supposed 1% pay raise for teachers is that they can work an extra day and get paid. Seriously?

I am all for being a progressive district. Instead of all the initiatives, etc. they should hire good teachers, great principals who are responsible to ensure they are performing well, and offer good professional development.

No Why less instructional time?

No Block days are difficult to teach and easily lose the concentration and focus of a student. It is also unfair to ask teachers to take on an additional class period.

No

No This puts more work on students and on the teachers and greatly reduces time for teachers to advise the students.

No Some kids who need the support through advisement are our potential dropouts and others are in need of direct teacher support. We are depriving them of the only in-school help available to them.

Also, the block schedule works for some subjects but in talking to many teachers from other schools that have adopted it, they feel that the break in days and the length of the class do not always maximize learning for struggling students. Especially if class sizes are going to increase they way we've cut teachers, this may not be the best way to save...not on the backs of our kids!

- Yes It gives students more class choices and opportunities for more electives.
- No
- No
- No My daughter has worked very hard to be ahead of the typical senior, so she could take extra class her senior year, to aid her in her college choice. By limiting the number of class she is now allowed to take, DCSD is limiting her extra class, which limits her college choice. I am very disappointed in DCSD. I am sad to say, that if I had little kids, I would not choose DCSD for my children. I have one younger student, who will now be open enrolled outside this once outstanding district.
- No Less instructional time for students and less time for them to get help from teachers. Also, adding more work for teachers for no extra pay.