

TIME REFORM TASK FORCE

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

DR. LUCY SMITH, CHAIR
NOVEMBER 29, 2007

“Make no mistake about it, we are in a race – a race to secure a future for Oklahoma’s children in this global economy. That requires more quality time on the tasks of teaching and learning.”

***- Sandy Garrett, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
State of Education Address, July 2007***

Draft of Time Reform Task Force Report Outline:

- 1. List of Members*
- 2. Cover letter from Dr. Smith*
- 3. Applicable statutes and regulations for consideration*
- 4. Definitions of terms – types of time, quality, etc.*
- 5. Recommendations to the State Board of Education*
- 6. Additional rationale / information from each workgroup*
- 7. Appendix to include key supporting documentation, “State of Education Address,” and list of online resources*

[1.] List of Time Reform Task Force Members

Chair: Dr. Lucy Smith, retired superintendent, McAlester Public Schools

- Ed Allen, president, Oklahoma Chapter, American Federation of Teachers
- Dr. Judith Ann Barber, education consultant, Grove
- Monica Barbour, parent, special needs child, Tulsa
- Bill Bentley, superintendent, Dibble Public Schools
- Brooke Bisel, student, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond
- Dr. James Branscum, superintendent, Metro Technology Center, Oklahoma City
- Stan Bryant, teacher, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Education Association
- Teresa Bryant, teacher, Cordell, Association of Professional Oklahoma Educators
- Glenda Cobb, assistant superintendent, Duncan Public Schools
- Bruce DeMuth, chief of staff, State Department of Career & Technology Education
- Lyndol Fry, retired educator, Hugo
- Dr. Patricia Hardre, faculty member, University of Oklahoma, Norman
- Lisa Horn, special services director, El Reno Public Schools
- The Reverend Dr. Gene Hunt, retired minister, Oklahoma City
- Dr. Alan Ingram, federal programs director, Oklahoma City Public Schools
- Dr. Silvy Kirk, high school principal, Midwest City-Del City Public Schools
- Dr. Ken Lease, VP of academic services, Oklahoma School of Science & Mathematics
- Matthew Livingood, member, Tulsa Public Schools Board of Education
- Don Parker, chief information officer/executive VP, Bank of Oklahoma, Tulsa
- Helen Parker, president, Norman High School PTA
- David Pennington, superintendent, Ponca City Public Schools
- Danny Rennels, executive director, Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association
- Bobby Russell, superintendent, Pauls Valley Public Schools
- Dr. Joe Siano, superintendent, Norman Public Schools
- Terri Silver, president, Oklahoma Congress of PTAs
- Connie Sloan, 2006 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year finalist, Canadian Public Schools
- Kathryn Turner, superintendent, Fletcher Public Schools
- Cathy Williams, elementary principal, Vinita Public Schools

[5.] Recommendations to the State Board of Education

On Wednesday, November 14, 2007, the State Superintendent's Time Reform Task Force met to finalize recommendations to be presented to the State Board of Education for their consideration. Members discussed in detail and unanimously approved a draft of the recommendations. Proposals came after two months of investigation and deliberations by Task Force members in three workgroups:

- Quality of Time
- Quantity of Time
- Costs of Time Reform

Members agreed that the primary objective of Time Reform is to increase the quantity and quality of instructional time that Oklahoma students are provided to at least the regional and national averages and, ultimately, reach the international average for instructional time. Such changes are considered necessary for Oklahoma schools to become nationally and globally competitive.

It is imperative that all Oklahoma schools strive to maximize the quality of all instructional time to facilitate the best learning opportunities for each young citizen of our state. "Quality instructional time" or "academic learning time" is defined as the time spent teaching the essential elements of each academic subject, using high-quality instructional strategies that provide good learning pathways for all students. Within this framework, high academic expectations should be established by the State of Oklahoma for all subjects and grade levels. These expectations should allow for choice, creativity, and flexibility at the local school district level.

The recommendations of the Time Reform Task Force are as follows:

1. All Oklahoma schools should be required to undertake self-examination on their use of school time, particularly the amount of time spent on quality academic instruction. This examination should then be used to develop a plan of action to increase the quantity and quality of academic instructional time at their school.
 - Principals, teachers, parents, and district administrators must be involved in this process and the related discussions on topics such as:
 - The school's current use of time for instruction
 - A description of quality time in its ideal state
 - The barriers to achieving this quality instructional time
 - The steps necessary to achieve the ideal objective
 - The quantified indicators of growth in learning that will demonstrate the effectiveness of proposed changes
 - The benefits of the proposed changes
 2. The self-examination instrument, referenced in item 1 above, shall be developed by the State Department of Education. This instrument, with a strong focus on quality, should be incorporated into each school district's Comprehensive Local Education Plan and adopted by
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its local board of education in a public meeting. Data from the quality time self-evaluation shall be included in the school's Annual Application for Accreditation.

- Portions of the Oklahoma Essential Elements document may be used as a map for improvement in quality time for instruction. Essential Elements 8.4, 6.5, and 7.6 are particularly relevant.
 - The time self-examination instrument should be made available to schools in the second semester of the 2007-08 school year and developed for initial local implementation in the 2008-09 school year.
3. The State Board of Education and the Oklahoma Legislature must acknowledge that -- as plans to increase quality instructional time are developed and implemented as a result of the local self-examination process and subsequent actions -- additional resource requirements will probably be identified.
- While some steps to increase quality instructional time may be taken with little additional costs, other steps or plans may require significant additional resources to fully implement the strategies identified.
 - When additional funding is required for steps or plans to increase quality instructional time, this funding may be provided through pilot program grants.
4. The state, as well as all local districts and sites, should establish appropriate means for recognizing and celebrating short-term and long-term improvements in academic achievement as a result of processes to increase academic learning time.
- The task of monitoring, evaluating, and recognizing the gains resulting from steps taken to improve the quality and quantity of instructional time is an important component of time reform.
 - These processes should also be used to develop a clearinghouse of best practices and visible models for school officials to consider in their quest to increase quality instructional time and academic achievement.
5. State law should differentiate between an "instructional day" and a "school day."
- Because parent-teacher conference days and up to five professional development days can be counted as instructional days under current state law, it is estimated that the average school district in Oklahoma may actually consist of 171-173 days of instruction.
 - Limits should be placed on the ability of local school districts to utilize "instructional days" for purposes other than engagement of students in learning.

6. Oklahoma's school year should be extended to include more instructional time and formally recognize the importance of parent-teacher conferences and professional development. Increasing the annual number of instructional days required in law should be phased in over a number of school years toward the ultimate goal of parity with an international average.
 - For the 2008-09 school year, the minimum number of instructional days should equal 180 plus five professional development (PD) days and two parent-teacher conference (PTC) days.*
 - For the 2009-10 school year, the minimum number of instructional days should equal 185 plus 5 PD and 2 PTC days.
 - For the 2010-11 school year, the minimum number of instructional days should equal 190 plus 5 PD and 2 PTC days.

 7. The state law that requires schools to request approval of the State Board of Education in order to operate on Saturdays should be eliminated as long as using a Saturday for an "instructional day" is approved by the local board of education.

 8. Extension of the school day should be left to the discretion of the locally elected board of education for each school.

 9. Local school officials should pursue a goal of moving activities, particularly competitions and events, outside of the school day. However, scheduling of non-core classes should be left to the discretion of the local school board.

 10. The Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association (OSSAA) guidelines related to student eligibility to participate in extra-curricular activities, activity absences, number of games allowed, and length of season should be applicable to all Oklahoma public schools and students.
 - Every five years, an external Constitutional Review Committee of the OSSAA meets to evaluate policies. This body should review the current "10-day rule" in regard to activity absences and then make recommendations to the State Board of Education if changes are deemed necessary. State enforcement of these provisions should also be reviewed.

 11. Local school boards that, based on their quality time self-examination process, decide to increase their instructional days beyond the minimum instructional days defined in item 6 above could submit proposals for pilot projects to be funded by state grants for the purpose of developing Model Extended School Year Programs. Preference would be given to those
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models that would demonstrate significant improvement in student academic achievement and could be easily replicated by other schools or districts.

12. Extending the school year, as outlined in #6 above, must be implemented contingent upon the following premises:

- a) All staff members are fully compensated for extended contractual time.
 - b) All currently mandated costs are funded as well as previous requests for state funding to cover increasing school operational costs.
 - c) Teacher salaries should meet or exceed the regional average of teacher salaries (base salary plus cafeteria plan benefits) consistent with the average number of days taught in the region.
- These premises are put in place to protect school districts from the continuing financial challenges of meeting both mandated and operational obligations already in place. Any extended time proposals will further tax an already financially stressed education system.
 - The projected cost of extending the school year, based on current average operational costs for schools (salaries, transportation, school lunch, etc.) is \$18,000,000 per day. The projected cost of adding one hour per day (with no additional transportation or meal costs) to the current 175-instructional day school year is \$382,800,000, or \$2,187,000 per hour.

*Based on the cost projections in #12 and the recommendation in #6, for the 2008-09 school year, adding seven additional school days would cost a projected \$126 million.