

BUY  
PHOTO  
REPRINTS  
ONLINE

SUBSCRIBE TO  
THE GAZETTE  
ONLINE  
OR IN PRINT

**GAZETTENET.com**

Daily Hampshire Gazette - Established 1786

Amherst Bulletin

The Recorder

Valley Advocate

Pioneer Valley

Many Hands

Hampshire Life



Sign in



Account



Trouble finding something?



Contact us



Classifieds

news search

Local News State/Region U.S./World Obituaries Sports Business Schools Colleges Politics Opinion Entertainment Health Living Sci/Tech

# One elementary school's inquiry into longer day

By **CATHERINE BAUM**  
Staff Writer

Login to post comments



Printer-friendly version

Friday, October 2, 2009

**NORTHAMPTON** - Two years ago, Bridge Street School won a grant to study the merits of longer school days. The school didn't end up extending its hours, but benefited from the inquiry.

"A lot of stuff spun off of this," said Principal Johanna McKenna.

The experiment moved parents and teachers to add enrichment offerings like a literacy magazine and math and chess clubs. Teachers are also undergoing professional development in writing, an area of focus in the study.

McKenna applied for the grant from the state Department of Education, which provided about \$1,300 per child, because she saw a need for more school time - and because the resources were there. The state's average of per-pupil expenditure is \$12,813, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

McKenna and Bridge Street teachers collaborated and created the "ideal day," which theoretically ran from 8:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. instead of the current 8:55 a.m. to 3 p.m. schedule. That ideal day would offer more individual instruction, planning time for teachers, community outreach and enrichment.

Businesses expressed interest in working with the school to provide activities, including local artists, science programs and physical education facilities like the YMCA.

The plan called for 20 added minutes of writing in each class, McKenna said, weaving writing into subjects like history, math and science.

"When you look at the time teachers spend in their lessons, there's really not a lot of time on a regular basis to add in writing," McKenna said. "It was amazing to watch how just adding in 20 minutes could have such a big impact."

Writing is beneficial because it allows students to sharpen skills in reading, spelling, critical thinking, organizing and in tailoring presentations for an audience, McKenna said. Teachers benefit because when students write, they show teachers what they've learned.

The second year of the grant was dedicated to parental input in the form of surveys and community meetings. Ultimately, 60 percent of parents indicated that they do not support the extended learning day, while 40 percent of parents said they liked the idea.

The school required 80 percent parental approval to implement the change. McKenna cited the lack of flexibility as a determining factor - the grant required all students take on the change for all days of the week.

Many parents, she said, supported a longer day for three days out of the week instead of five.

"A lot of parents like their kids to be able to have family time at 3 o'clock," McKenna said. "Suburban communities like Northampton tend to look at extending the day, but then not go forward because a lot of children already have a lot of activities outside of school."

**Go Green & Save up to 60%!**

**INK & TONER SOLUTIONS** LLC  
www.inksolutionsma.com

**Green Business**

## Popular stories

- Candidate hurt, troubled by email message
- UMass suspends football players after arrests
- Genevieve Abbruzzese and Daniel Kristek
- Hadley head-on crash injures two
- Responsibility misplaced

Catherine Baum can be reached at [cbaum@gazettenet.com](mailto:cbaum@gazettenet.com).

Filed Under: [local](#) [news](#) [northampton](#) [schools](#)



[Local News](#) | [State/Region](#) | [U.S./World](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Schools](#) | [Colleges](#) | [Politics](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Health](#) | [Living](#) | [Sci/Tech](#) | [Blogs](#)

[Copyright Notice](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help Center](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Subscribe to the Gazette](#) | [Advertising](#)

Daily Hampshire Gazette © 2008 All rights reserved