

# The 21-Hour School Day

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**T**he crisis in American education has been attributed to many causes. Our study, conducted with 140,000 schoolchildren in 120 school districts over a period of three weeks, indicates that one of these causes — length of school day — has such a large effect on test scores that no other factors need be considered. We determined that the optimal school day is 21 hours long.

## **The Problem: Declining Test Scores**

American schoolchildren, like schoolchildren in many other nations, have suffered from declining test scores. The decline is measurable over the last three decades.

## **Cause and Effect**

Schoolchildren in Japan and Germany enjoy a school year that is approximately 200 days longer than the standard American school year. This fact explains why the test scores of American schoolchildren have been declining for 30 years.

## **Experiments with School Days of Different Lengths**

We experimented with school days of various lengths: 1 hour, 21 hours, and 84 hours.

A 1-hour school day provided clear benefits and clear disadvantages. The chief benefit was brevity. The main disadvantage was a lack of time for anything other than test taking.

The 84-hour school day had many merits. However, U.S. federal labor regulations and the pressure of public opinion virtually rule this out as a viable alternative.

Therefore, the 21-hour school day proved optimal.

## **Results: Higher Test Scores**

The 21-hour school day permitted teachers to spend more time each day administering tests. With more tests being given, the cumulative test scores (the sum of all the scores of all the tests added together) were dramatically higher.

## **Quality Time**

Our findings indicate that while the length of the school day is important, so too is the manner in which the class time is used during that day. It is crucial that classes be conducted continuously during the entire 21-hour school day, with no breaks, except of course two breaks for meals and one for a lavatory visit.

## **Additional Benefits**

The 21-hour school day also had a marked effect on students' attitudes toward learning. The average student was able to sleep approximately 2 hours per day. The continuous sleep deprivation lessened the students' rebellious impulses. Classrooms were much quieter with the 21-hour school day than with the traditional shorter school day.

## **Addendum: The Importance of Nutrition**

Medical authorities maintain that growing children require appropriate amounts of food. We are conducting studies to confirm or refute this claim.



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