

Cover Photo: School Bus in Boca Raton, FL, December 2007.  
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# Talking Points for Kids™ School Time



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## SCHOOL TIME

At the end of a school day, most students rush out of the building. Some go home where they read, draw, listen to music, or play with friends. Others go to after-school programs. Still others play on sport teams or take dance or music lessons. Whatever the activity, most students are happy to have free time.

Some people, however, believe that American students should have less free time. They say that students do not spend enough time in school. According to these people, there should be longer school days or more school days. Some even say that the answer is both longer and more school days.

In this book, you'll read about the points of view of different people on the question of whether American students should be spending more time in school. You probably have a point of view on this topic, too! Read, listen, think, and write—and see if you get new ideas about this topic.

## What *Community Leaders* Say About: School Time

In the United States, the school year is 180 days. That is about half the days in a year. In many other countries in the world, students spend many more days of the year in school. In China, students have two months for summer vacation, not the three months many American students enjoy. That means the school year in China is longer than the school year in the United States. A school day in the United States is about 6 1/2 hours long. But a school day in China can be 9 hours.



People in city and state governments in the United States worry that less school time cheats American students out of learning. They say there is good reason to worry. There are tests taken by students in different countries all over the world. These tests show what students know in math, science, and other subjects. The students' scores in one country can be compared to the scores of students in other countries.

The table below compares school days and reading scores in different countries. Leaders use tables like this one to argue that American students would score higher on tests if they spent more time in school.

	School days in a year	World wide ranking in Reading
Japan	220	12
Russia	210	30
Mexico	202	31
United Kingdom	195	13
Canada	190-195	3
United States	180	33
Ireland	168-183	5

## What *Students in Other Countries Say About:* School Time

Like most Chinese children who are eight or nine years old, Zhuzhu goes to school from Monday to Friday for nine hours a day. Zhuzhu's school day is longer than her parents' workday! She spends an hour more at school than her parents do at work. In some parts of China, students spend even more time at school—up to 12 hours a day.

Even on the weekends, Zhuzhu has to make time to study. Like other children in China, Zhuzhu studies at least seven hours a week when she is not in school. She has little time to play or to watch television. Zhuzhu doesn't mind. She sees school as her job, the same way her mother and father have work that they do.

Even though Zhuzhu works hard at school, she still has some time to play with her friends. There are several short breaks during the school day and one longer one after lunch. Zhuzhu and her friends play games like basketball during these breaks. They also have classes to learn sports like

tennis. Zhuzhu and her friends get tired from working and playing hard at school. But all of the children rest for a time in the afternoon. When they wake up, they are ready for more school.



## What *Some People* Say About: School Time

### EDITORIAL

#### More School Time Means a Brighter Future By Lydia Janz, Editor of the *Bayview News*

Tuesday was a day of bad news in Bayview. That is when a newspaper published the state test scores of students. Bayview students did not do well on reading and math tests. But I have good news. I know our students can do better. They just need more time in school. I believe the Bayview school board should add another hour to the school day.

Many of our students spend almost as much time watching television and playing video games as they do in school. Children may enjoy themselves watching television and playing video games but these activities don't help them learn what they need to do. Students need to learn to read and do math at higher levels. They aren't getting better at reading and math by watching television and playing games.

In order to stay strong, our city needs to grow. New businesses bring money and new life to our city. But new businesses will only come to Bayview if we have good workers. We will only have good workers if our students have good reading and math skills. The way to improve these skills is by spending more time in school.



## A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I am a fourth grader at Bayview Elementary. My school day starts at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 2:30. Some people think the school day should be 8 or 9 hours long. That means I would not get home until 4:30 or 5:30! That's a long day, even if you don't count the hour of homework I do each night. A longer school day wouldn't leave much time for other activities.

After school, I play sports and read. My soccer team practices once a week. At school, I'm learning to play the recorder. I practice every day at home. I also use the computer to read the news and find information about things that interest me.

All of these things help me learn. Soccer teaches me how to be part of a team. Learning new songs on my recorder teaches me about music. Reading on the computer helps me learn new information.

I also think it's important to just have time to hang out with my friends. If Bayview students have to spend more time in school, we will miss out on a lot.

Sincerely,

Lee Fisher



## More from *Community Leaders* About: School Time

There are 10,080 minutes in a week. American children go to school for 1,950 minutes a week. That doesn't sound like much. American children spend about 20% of their time in school. That is only during the school year.

Here is some more school time math. There are 365 days in a year. American students go to school 180 days. American students go to school about 50% of the year. For this 50% of the year, American students are at school only 20% of the time.

Students in many other countries have longer days. They also have a longer school year. They go to school between 220 and 240 days of the year. That means students in almost every other country in the world have 40 to 60 more school days than American students. By the time they finish high school, those students have been to school at least 13 months more than American students. That's more than a full year of learning that Americans miss.

Photo: Children from the American Institute school in Monterrey. October, 2007  
Taken by Luke Betts. Released into Public Domain.

In tests given to students from many countries, most American students do not score very high. In fact, students from 24 other countries score higher than American students in math. Students from 14 other countries score higher than American students in reading.

The solution to this problem seems simple. More time in school equals more learning.



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**What do you think?**

How much time do you spend at school? What time do you get to school? When do you go home?

Do you feel you could do better in school if you spent more time learning?

What are some things you would not be able to do if school ended an hour later everyday? Or a month later every year?

Why do people think longer school days or school years will help students learn more?

Do you think school should be longer?

Should students spend more time in schools?

Yes, I think students should spend more time in school because...	No, I don't think students should spend more time in school because...