

Longer Days, Better Scores, Fewer Dropouts for Wilkes Schools

Written by Steve Frank
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Do longer school days mean benefits to students? The Wilkes County Schools think so, and they've got the data to back that up. Wilkes extended the school day for this past school year, meeting the state requirement of having 1,000 hours of school by extending the days by 45 minutes. Dr. Steve Laws, Wilkes Superintendent, told the Wilkes Journal Patriot that elementary and middle schools used this additional time for enrichment activities and intervention that varied according to needs of students. He said the use of this additional time school each day likely helped increase test scores.

In the high schools, the additional 45 minutes each day was absorbed by extending each class period. Laws reported that end of grade test scores were up, drop-outs down. He said the increased focus from adjusting to a longer school day and implementing curriculum and technology changes likely invigorated teachers and helped them be more effective in the classroom.

The N.C. General Assembly approved the Wilkes school plan to shorten the calendar by 18 days and add 45 minutes to each school day for 2009-10 last year, thus helping the system save \$900,000 and avoid job cuts. It met the requirement of having 1,000 hours of school, but allowed a variance from the mandatory 180 days. Wilkes is the state's only school system with the shortened calendar.