



# Pacific Elementary School

www.pacificesd.org  
50 Ocean Street/P.O. Box H  
Davenport, CA 95017  
831-425-7002

Dear Pacific School Families-

May 2017

We're writing to better explain the reasoning behind the changes to Pacific School's daily schedule planned for the 2017-2018 school year. For many years, teaching staff have expressed the concern that it is hard to find an effective balance between Pacific School's outstanding enrichment activities, including FoodLab, Life Lab, reading buddies, music, drama, and field trips, and core curriculum, including math, language arts, science, and social studies. As Pacific School is strongly committed to both its unique and strong tradition of hands-on learning and to success in traditional classroom skills, we felt that the best solution was to increase the number of instructional minutes available in the first through sixth grades.

There are various ways to increase instructional minutes including:

1. Increasing the number of school days
2. Reducing recess
3. Beginning school earlier
4. Ending school later on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays
5. Ending school later on minimum days including Wednesdays, conference week days, and the last day of school

All of these options have pros and cons. After considerable analysis of the options, and with the approval of the Board, we selected a combination of beginning school earlier (8:40 instead of 8:45) and ending school later on minimum days (2:00 instead of 12:30). Below is some of our specific reasoning.

1. Increasing the number of school days was not considered practical as it would require contract changes with teachers and would put Pacific School on a different calendar than other schools in the county, causing considerable inconvenience to families and staff.
2. Both solid scientific research and common sense suggest that unstructured breaks and outdoor play time are essential to effective education.
3. Beginning school earlier is constrained by the Metro bus schedule. While an 8:40 start time is compatible with the current Route 40 schedule, a start time any earlier than that would require a Route 40 schedule change. In addition, many of our families, both in-district and out-of-district, transport their students considerable distances to arrive at school, and we felt that a substantially earlier start time had the potential to both increase the stress of getting to school for a large number of families and increase the number of tardy students. In the end, we felt that a 5-minute change to the start time was as much as was practical at this time.
4. Ending school later on non-Wednesdays was also seriously considered, but ultimately rejected because of concerns that it would make it even more difficult for students to participate in after school sports, classes, and other activities. Many of these after-school activities take place in Santa Cruz and already require very rapid transition and transportation, and even then students may arrive late. We did not want to make participation in such activities even more challenging for families than it already is.
5. Ultimately we decided to extend the school day on Wednesdays and other minimum days. Although this required teachers sacrificing some preparation and collaboration time and families sacrificing some family time, it was felt to be the best of the available options to gain additional time beyond the 5 minutes provided by the earlier start. In making the decision, we noted the Rec program is highly utilized during Wednesdays and conference weeks, suggesting that for many families the longer school day would actually be a benefit, not a burden.

We hope this information is helpful. Please let us know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,  
Eric Gross & Elizabeth Andrews