

IS AN EXTENDED SCHOOL DAY THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR U.S. STUDENTS?



extend | radical | crucial | attain | initiative

USE THE FOCUS WORDS

extend (*verb*) to stretch out; to make longer

➞ **Sample Sentence:** You can **extend** your goldfish's life by keeping its water clean.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What are some steps you could take to **extend** a plant's life?

radical (*adjective*) extreme

➞ **Sample Sentence:** The 1990s rap group Kris Kross had a **radical** style: They wore their clothes backwards!

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** How would you feel if your teacher had a **radical** hairstyle, like an unusual color or a Mohawk?

crucial (*adjective*) very important, essential

➞ **Sample Sentence:** Reading and writing are **crucial** skills for doing well in school.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Is owning a cell phone **crucial** to having a good social life?

attain (*verb*) to achieve or reach a goal

➞ **Sample Sentence:** It took a year of hard work as class president for Vicky to **attain** the admiration and respect of her classmates.

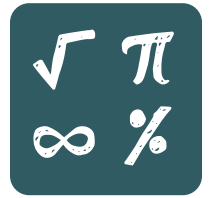
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What are some goals that you would like to **attain** by the time you graduate from high school?

initiative (*noun*) a plan to solve a problem

➞ **Sample Sentence:** The late Senator Ted Kennedy proposed an **initiative** that included extending the school day.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Propose an **initiative** to improve the health of middle school students.

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DO THE MATH


Option 1: Senator Ted Kennedy thought it was **crucial** for Massachusetts schools to improve. He thought it would take **radical** change to **attain** that goal. He started an **initiative** to **extend** the school day.

Most American students now go to school for 180 six-hour days. How many total hours is this?

- A. 1,080
- B. 680
- C. 6,080
- D. 186

Option 2: Senator Kennedy's **initiative** proposed **extending** the school day by 30%—a **radical** increase. If each 6-hour school day were **extended** according to Senator Kennedy's plan, each day would be how many hours?

There are alternative ways to **attain** the goal of **extending** school time by 30%. For example, schools could add days to the school year instead of changing the length of each individual school day. If the 180-day school year were **extended** according to this plan, each year would be how many days?

 **Discussion Question:** Which would be a more **radical** change: more hours each school day, or more days each school year? Which kind of **initiative** would win more support from parents? Which one would do a better job of helping students **attain** academic excellence? Some students think it's **crucial** to have a long summer vacation. Do you agree?

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THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

Principal Tim Wernentin at Rock Island High School in Illinois noticed that middle school students coming to his high school were not prepared to succeed in ninth grade. Many of his freshmen were not able to **attain** passing grades in **crucial** areas such as math and language arts. He considered **extending** the school day for all ninth graders, but that idea seemed too **radical**. Instead, he created an **initiative** for his incoming students called “Rock Solid.”

For the Rock Solid program, Principal Wernentin decided to offer students moving up from middle school an option to get started at Rock Island High before all the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders arrived. Ninth graders got the whole school to themselves during the last few weeks of summer. So instead of **extending** the school day, he **extended** a special welcome! During the Rock Solid session, ninth graders got tours of the school, met with the teachers they would have, and received free tutoring sessions for any academic areas they struggled with.

Mr. Seemy’s class thought that this was a brilliant idea. In fact, they thought the middle school should offer a Rock Solid program for elementary school students moving up to middle school.

In order to plan a program like Rock Solid effectively, you must identify the problems and think about solutions in a detailed way.

Step One: Think silently for a minute about what was difficult for you when you moved up to middle school from elementary school.


Write it down here: _____


Step Two: Get into groups of four. Share what you wrote. Ask other students in your group if you need to clarify anything for them.


Step Three: As a group, select one problem that you think might be solved by a program like Rock Solid.

Write it down here: _____

Discuss the following questions as a group, and then write down your responses individually.

 What would be your approach for addressing the problem? _____

 Do you think that elementary school students entering middle school would like your idea? _____

 How would you be able to tell if your approach was effective? _____

