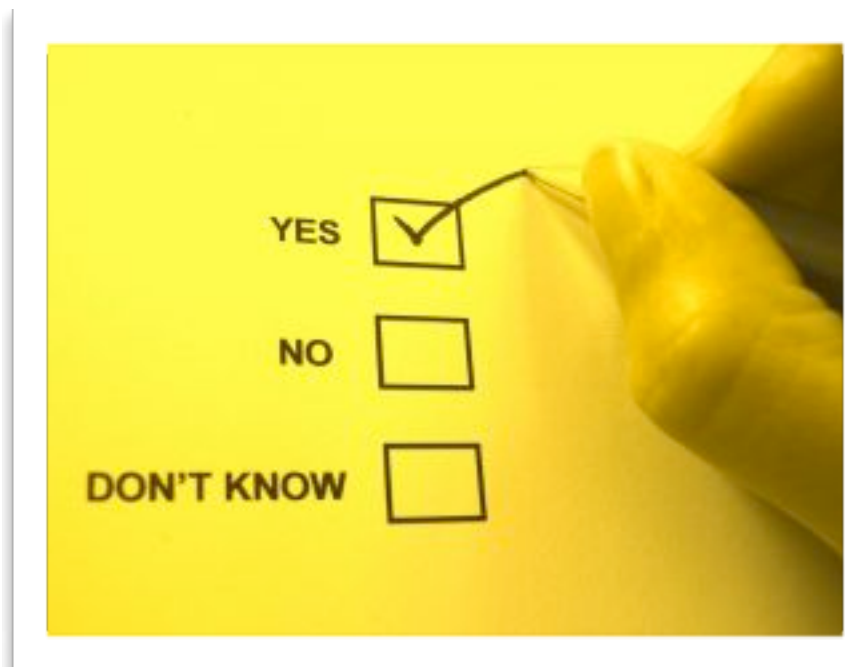




Boys & Girls Club
of Pembroke

Staggered Bells, Healthy Kids 2010 Survey Report



Survey Project: Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke
Project Funding: Heart & Stroke Foundation
of Ontario, Spark Grant
Report: Rosa Lee
Project Manager
Staggered Bells, Healthy Kids
Date: July 2010

This project was made possible
through funding from the
Heart and Stroke Foundation
of Ontario



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Acknowledgements

The Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke would like to thank the following:

The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario for the Spark Community Advocacy Grant which made this project possible.

Vonnie Barron and Micheline Turnau of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario for their guidance.

The staff of the Renfrew County District School Board and the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board for allowing access to the schools, their staff for facilitating the distribution and collection of surveys and the schools for their friendly co-operation.

Admin, Ben Fleming of Facebook group, *People Against Staggered Bells in Renfrew County!* who helped promote the survey.

All the wonderful parents and students who participated in the survey.

Rosa Lee
Project Manager
Staggered Bells, Healthy Kids Survey



The Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke

Since 1966, The Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke (“the Club”) has been providing various educational and recreational programs for children ages 6 - 18, regardless of social background or financial situation.

During the school year, the Club offers daily after school programs for children ages 6 - 12 at their Lea Street clubhouse. They provide healthy snacks each day and a hot meal once a week to members. Members also engage in cooking and baking activities to learn nutritional food preparation.

The Club offers a weekly Recreation Night under the supervision of trained staff and volunteers to promote structured physical activities. Once a month, the Club facilitates special activity days for their members to focus on physical pursuits such as dancing, tobogganing and baseball. They also offer themed day camps during March break and the summer months.

Per their mandate, no child is turned away. Families who are unable to pay the small annual membership fee or day camp costs are referred to the County of Renfrew Child Subsidy Program.

The Club is supported through generous funding and donations from various local businesses and organizations, such as The United Way, the County of Renfrew, Kiwanis, the Township of Laurentian Valley, The Brick and Wal-Mart.

Mission Statement

To provide a safe and supportive place where children and youth can
experience new opportunities and overcome barriers,
build positive relationships and develop confidence
and skills for life.

To learn more about the Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke, individuals may contact Executive Director, Bonnie Schryer at:

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The Project

The Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke wish to offer a Before & After School Program to local families. This program would include homework help, nutritious snacks, sports activities, crafts and games. The Club began approaching various principals with the idea of running the programs in the schools. The need for a before and after school program was questioned and the program never got launched.

Staggered Bells

In 2009, schools across of Renfrew County implemented a staggered bell system. This means start times for schools are staggered with classes beginning as early as 7:45 AM while others start at 9:35 AM. End times were between 1:30 PM and 4:30 PM.

The school boards proposed the staggered bells system “to allow fewer buses to do more runs”¹ in an effort to lower transportation costs. In May 2010, the school boards projected an estimated \$1 million in savings.²

The Club was concerned about the cost to local families and the welfare of the students affected by the staggered bells. Healthy eating habits, homework and after school recreation were being negatively affected. These concerns were shared by ...

... outraged parents:

“My 4 yr old twins are in SK this year (I also have a son in gr 2 and one in gr 5 ... all in hockey) ... My children are home from school at 4:40. They are VERY tired. Society is complaining about the health of our children saying that obesity is too high. How am I suppose to get my kids fed, changed, and out the door in about 2 min so that my 4 yr old son can make it on the ice for hockey practice at 5:00? ... How do I explain to my 4 yr old ‘Sorry you are late for practice every day because your mother feels it is important for you to eat something before you spend an hour on the ice after a full day of school!’”³

- Patricia Borne, Parent
Chalk River

... exhausted students:

“... when I have to go to work right after school, homework time gets a little scrunched ... I haven't had breakfast on a school day in over 2 weeks. 2 weeks! And after ‘breakfast’ I have hardly any time to bike to school.”⁴

- Mattie Landrigan, Student
Mackenzie High

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... community leaders:

“Furthermore, working parents in Renfrew County whose jobs are far from their homes will have difficulty leaving for work on time when their elementary school aged children are picked up a half hour later. These parents will be forced to miss out on working hours or hire a babysitter to look after their little ones for the time they cannot be at home - either way they are forced to pay out of pocket for the RCBE's new "money saving" measures. Again, it appears as though the newly adopted staggered bells system is ill suited for a large rural area and is a much better fit for a densely populated, urban areas such as Ottawa or Toronto.”⁵

- Dave Mackay, President
National Farmers Union (Renfrew County)

The screenshot shows a Facebook page for "People Against Staggered Bells in Renfrew County!". The page has tabs for "掲示板" (Bulletin Board), "基本データ" (Basic Data), and "ディスカッション" (Discussion). A post by Ben Fleming says: "This survey has been brought to my attention. If you have a few minutes, please fill it out. Thank you!". Below the post is a yellow survey form titled "Staggered Bells, Healthy Kids Survey" with a URL and a timestamp of "2010年5月13日 18:00". There are two comments: one by Serena Bedard dated 3月15日 10:23 and one by Sue McSheffrey dated 5月25日 11:41.

... and local politicians:

Committee member Mary Campbell, the mayor of McNab/Braeside said she did not believe there were big problems getting the plow trucks out in the winter, but she has heard that staggered bells are causing families stress.

"Families are coping but barely," added committee chairwoman Ann Aikens, mayor of Deep River, which was one of the areas included in the pilot project.

"For families that have a couple of children that are involved in different recreational programs after school, this has made it much more difficult for them to find the time to get children to the activities." Reeve Audrey Green of Renfrew said she is aware of some students had to cut their extracurricular sports from three to one because of transportation scheduling challenges.

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"Students are finding it difficult. Everything now revolves around the bus schedule. I really wish they would stop it (staggered bells)," she said.

Judy Mulvihill, the county's manager of Child Care Services, said the county will definitely notice an increased need for child care for students whose school start time doesn't match with their parents' work day. ⁶

- "Local politicians voice their displeasure"
The Daily Observer

Renfrew County does not currently have a solution to help local families address these issues in a positive and cost-effective manner. That is where The Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke would like to step forward.

Proposal

The Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke has over 14 years of before and after school programming experience. As local experts in this field, they suspected that the staggered bells initiative would increase the need for a supervised before and after school program in the schools. This suspicion was verified by feedback received directly from the parents of Club members.

Before the Club could act, they needed to determine if there was enough of a need from local families affected by the staggered bells to justify the program to the school boards and financial supporters.

In January 2010, The Boys & Girls Club of Pembroke applied to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario for a Spark Community Advocacy Grant to fund the cost of doing a survey to determine the effects of the staggered bells and the interest in a before and after school program.

If the survey results showed enough public interest, the Club would approach schools about offering the before and after school program starting in September of 2010.



Goals

- ✓ Gather information on how the staggered bells are impacting families
- ✓ Find out if parents want a before and after school program for their children
- ✓ Get the program into schools (if enough of a demand is present)

The Survey

The original intention of the survey was to find out how many school children are being affected by the staggered bells and if parents were interested in a before & after school program. A survey was created and made available online through PollDaddy.com.

After some feedback from the public, the online survey was altered to allow respondents to comment on how the staggered bells affected their families. This opened up the survey to high school students and individuals who are not parents, but provide care or services to children affected by staggered bells.

Public schools received the original survey which focused on the number of children affected and program interest. The Catholic School Board, however was not amenable to permitting the original survey into their schools until all mention of the staggered bells were removed. Mary Lynn Schauer, the board's Superintendent of Business Services explained that the school board had done its own research on staggered bells and determined that the system was good.

Staggered Bells, Healthy Kids Survey

Last year, schools across Renfrew County integrated a staggered bell system. This has affected many families, leaving many children unattended, straining budgets with extra baby-sitting costs and interfering with healthy eating and homework habits.

The Boys and Girls Club of Pembroke has received a \$5,000 [Spark Grant](#) from the [Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario](#) to conduct a survey to give us an idea of how serious the problem is and to discover if a **Before & After School Program** is of interest to our community. The program would include **homework help, nutritious snacks, sports activities, crafts and games.**



"Our parents are very happy with it," Ms. Schauer stated. She said that the children of the Catholic elementary schools are able to sleep in and enjoy more time in the mornings to get ready for school. Ms. Schauer explained that allowing the original survey into the schools would cast a negative light on the staggered bells system, which she felt would be inappropriate.

After discussion with the Club's executive director and grant representatives, the project manager determined that the ultimate goal of the survey was to get the before and after school program into the schools for families who required it. As requested, the Catholic school survey was re-written to remove all mention of staggered bells.

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Basic Questions

No matter which version of the survey individuals filled out, the basic questions the Club wanted answered were:

- ✓ number of children affected by staggered bells
- ✓ their ages
- ✓ which school(s) they attend
- ✓ if parents are interested in a before and after school program
- ✓ what program(s) they would require (before, after or both)
- ✓ the maximum weekly cost they would be willing to pay

The online survey also included a section for respondents to explain how the staggered bells affected the respondent's family.



Target Audience

The Club chose to target parents of children attending elementary schools in Pembroke, Petawawa, Beachburg and Westmeath. High school students and individuals who provide care or services for children were also given an opportunity to provide feedback.

Distribution

The survey was made available online through the Club's website⁷, their Facebook Fan Page⁸ and directly to the parents of their 150 members. 1,727 surveys were distributed through the Renfrew County Public School Board and 854 surveys were sent through the Renfrew County Catholic School Board.

Media & Publicity

A media release was sent to The Pembroke Daily Observer, The Petawawa Post, Gallant Media, MyFM 104.9 and Star 96 FM. Copies were also sent to the offices of MP Cheryl Gallant and MPP John Yakabuskie.

The media release was posted on the Club's website and Facebook Fan Page. A Facebook event was created to promote the project, providing a link to the online survey and a Facebook Ad was displayed between May 17th and June 19th.

Various individuals and groups promoted the survey on Facebook by "sharing" the event and inviting "friends" to attend.



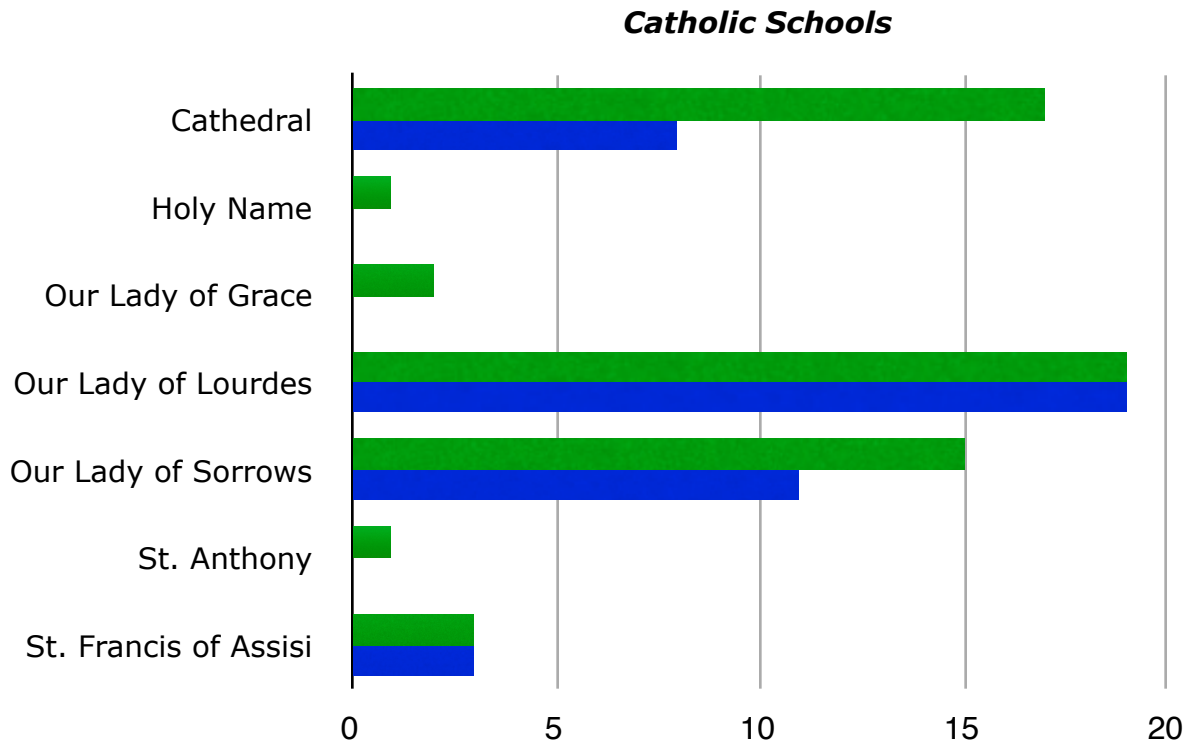
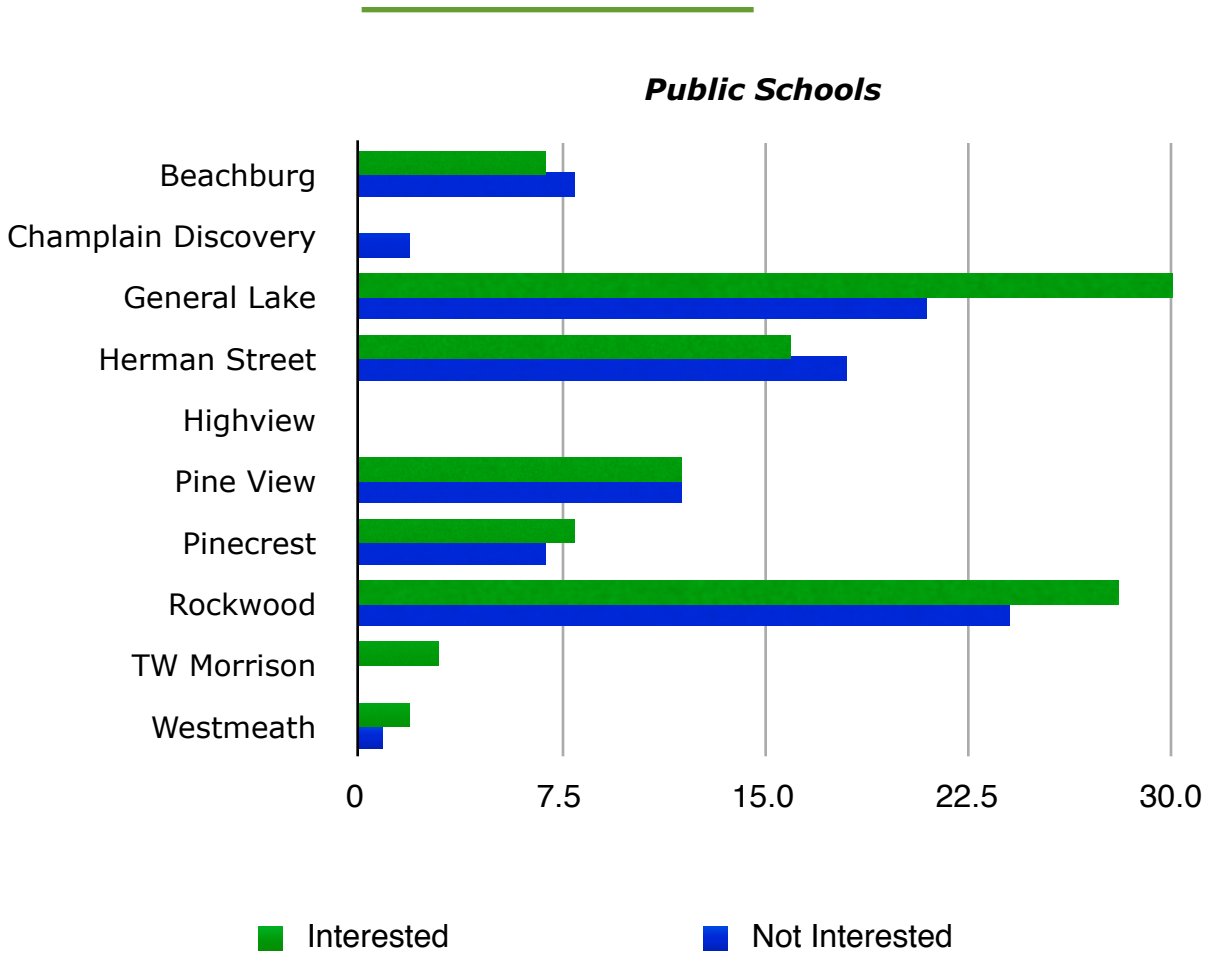
“Because of the staggered bells, I have lost work and my income is smaller. I have had to shorten my availability at work.”

- Mother of 9 year-old student
Our Lady of Grace

Survey Results

295 out the 2,581 surveys sent to elementary schools were returned (see *Appendix A: School Surveys Returned*). This is an 11.4% response rate. The low response rate is partly due to the fact that 4 schools either did not send out the surveys to their parents or did not have any returned.

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The Facebook Ad was displayed 186,495 times and received 52 clicks. 14 surveys were completed online and 1 printed survey was returned to the clubhouse completed.

Executive Director, Bonnie Schryer said, "We realized that parents are really busy and may not have had the time to fill out a survey, but it's important that we still hear from them if they're interested."

Parents that responded with the greatest interest in a before & after school program were from General Lake, Herman Street and Rockwood public schools, and Cathedral, Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic schools.



Age

Responses were for students ranging from 4 - 19 years of age. The average age of students affected by staggered bells is 8 years.

Schools

The schools which returned the most responses were Rockwood (21%), General Lake (21%) and Our Lady of Lourdes (19%).

Cost

Depending on their income and eligibility for subsidy, parents were willing to pay between \$20 to \$150 per child each week for before and after school programming. This means that the average cost parents are willing to pay is \$46.55 per child each week.

Affects of the Staggered Bells

The following is a selection of comments provided by respondents:

“My child gets home so late that by the time homework and dinner is done it's almost bedtime. On a good day he only gets 5 minutes to relax and it's homework time. Then a rushed meal, shower and bed. We run around from the time he is off the bus. I see the stress in my child's eyes. He is tired and has trouble concentrating on his school work. He has no time for himself and besides a rushed meal, we have no family time at all. Enrolling him in anything after school is out of the question. It's been very hard on him ... On all of us. We really wish that things go back to the way they were.”

- Parent of a 7 year-old student

Our Lady Of Lourdes



“I do not feel that it has affected my family but I do believe that it is having a huge impact on families. I also do not believe it is saving any money when I see all the half full buses driving past my driveway.”

- Parent of a 5 year-old student

Champlain Discovery



“I do not understand how the school board is saving money when more buses are being sent out. In Westmeath, there used to be only 2 buses, one of which took 2 elementary students who live a 10 min drive down into the bay. Now, because of the staggered bell, they are forced to send another bus 10 min into the bay when a high school one goes by there anyway. There are now 3 buses going to Westmeath for high school kids alone (one only has 6 kids on it) and another 2 for elementary school kids. So, where's that money being saved?”

- 16 year-old student

Fellowes High School

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"I have to arrange for two separate daycares for my children. I am having a hard time finding someone to take the kids before and after school. The kids still have to be up early so I can get to work and they are completely exhausted by the time they get home from school, especially my SK."

- Mother of 4 children

Rockwood



"To be honest it's not bad at all. I'm a stay at home mom and I find it much easier to get my son up and fed and ready to go. The morning is much easier for me. He comes home tired but not much later than last year. Only about 15 minutes later. The bus arrives faster at my house because there are less children, so his day is actually shorter. He doesn't sit on the bus for an hour after school's out. Now he's only on the bus for about 15-20 minutes. So, I like staggered bells."

- Parent of a 7 year-old student

T.W. Morrison



"<My daughter> is now home longer by herself. That may not be an issue for some parents but it is a concern for a young girl to be home alone that long. Especially with the recent events in our community. (ie. break and enters, and attempted sexual abuse in said cases). this is a huge concern as a single mother. I am leaving and returning to the house at set times.

- Mother of a 13 year-old student

Herman Street



"Sure, I get home at 3:30, but I'm always exhausted in the mornings because I've stayed up late the night before working ... I work until 10:30 pm and get home usually around 11:15 pm. One of my friends works 3 or 4 times a week until 12:00 am, and is always late for school because he doesn't have enough time to sleep."

- 16 year-old student

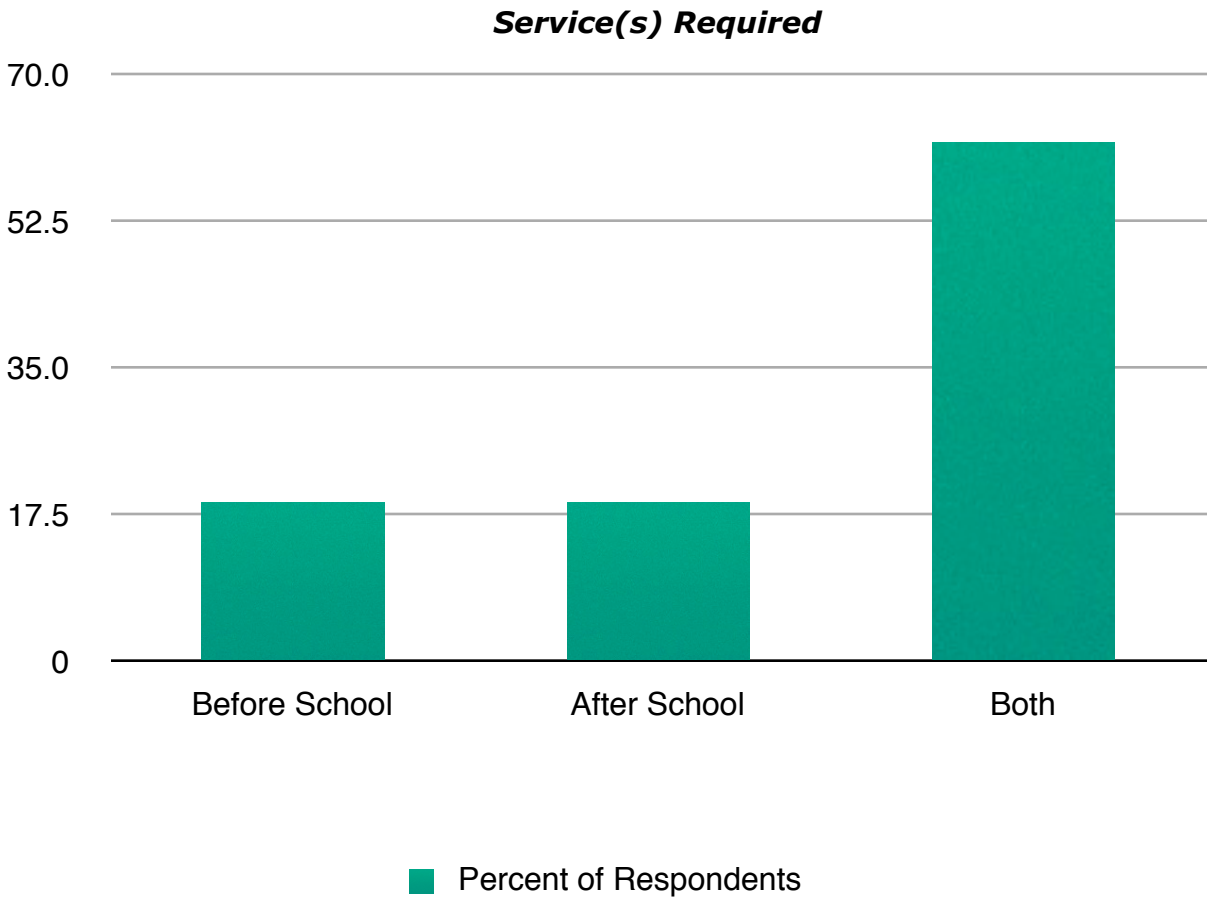
Fellowes High School

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100% of respondents who stated their families were not being affected by the staggered bells were stay-at-home or work-from-home parents with flexible schedules.

Interest

67% of respondents were interested in having a before and after school program available for their children. Of those, 19% of parents were interested in only before school services, 19% were interested in only after school services and 62% needed both before and after school services.



Decision

Based on the results of the Staggered Bells, Healthy Kids survey, the Boys and Girls Club of Pembroke is prepared to start offering their before and after school program in Pembroke and Petawawa, starting September 2010.

Mrs. Schryer has started contacting the schools which responded with the highest interest and is waiting to hear back from the principals. Alternatively, if the schools are not interested in partnering with the before & after school program initiative, the Club will determine the feasibility of holding the program at a separate location and busing the kids to and from the schools.

What's Next

On the provincial level, the Boys & Girls Club of Canada is already advocating these programs, especially with full-day every day kindergarten coming into effect. Locally, the Club is focusing their efforts on raising awareness with MP Cheryl Gallant, MPP John Yakabuski, community mayors and both school boards. The Club is also in partnership with KidActive and will be working with them to promote the program countywide.

The goal of this grant project is to have a before and after school program in several Renfrew County schools by September 2010 to encourage and assist students to stay healthy. The Club is extremely grateful for all efforts that helped bring this vital campaign to Renfrew County and looks forward to continuing to offer healthy programs to local youth.



Appendix A: School Surveys Returned

Public Elementary Schools

School	# of Families	Surveys Returned
Beachburg	150	16
Champlain	250	2
General Lake	250	51
Herman Street	292	34
Highview	200	0
Pine View	151	24
Pinecrest	139	15
Rockwood	250	52
Westmeath	45	3
Total	1,727	197

Catholic Elementary Schools

School	# of Families	Surveys Returned
Cathedral	150	25
Holy Name	185	1
Our Lady of Grace	18	2
Our Lady of Lourdes	201	38
Our Lady of Sorrows	200	26
St. Francis of Assisi	100	6
Total	854	98

Endnotes

- ¹ <http://www.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/stmarysdr/Board%20info/Binder1.pdf>
- ² <http://www.thedailyobserver.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2578960>
- ³ <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=267866360441&topic=10020>
- ⁴ <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=267866360441&topic=10020>
- ⁵ <http://www.thedailyobserver.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=1766154>
- ⁶ <http://www.thedailyobserver.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2578960>
- ⁷ <http://www.boysandgirlsclubofpembroke.com/survey.html>
- ⁸ <http://www.facebook.com/bgc.pembroke>