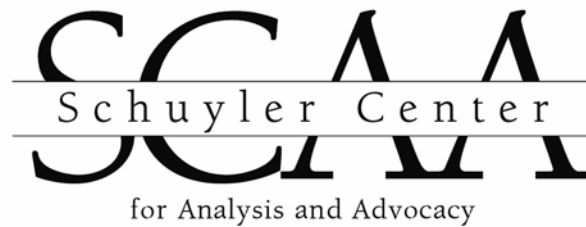


**Testimony for the Senate Education Committee  
on Flexible School Week Scheduling  
December 10, 2008**

**Presented by Karen Schimke, President and CEO  
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**



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## Testimony for the Senate Education Committee

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA) believes strongly in supporting the educational needs of children. SCAA also believes in supporting the needs of families—in particular, the needs of working parents.

SCAA is proud to be one of the convening organizations of New York State's early care and learning coalition, *Winning Beginning NY*. As such, we promote policy regarding high-quality home visiting, child care, and Pre-K. As the sole convener of the New York Children's Action Network (CAN), we promote programs that support children and families from the prenatal period through young adulthood.

SCAA believes that school day planning should take into account the schedules of working families. Parents often need to make child care arrangements before and after school because school schedules do not accommodate parents' schedules. In addition, young people require school days that fit the way they learn. As the President and CEO of SCAA and one of the conveners of *Winning Beginning NY*, I would like to make six points today that address the issue of school day planning.

One: Child care. Since the state does not yet have a paid family leave program, many parents must place their infants in child care when they are very young. These children sometimes remain in out-of-school time placements for years. With 54% of children under the age of six with two parents in the workforce, there are a lot of young children who require care.

Two: Full-day Pre-K. Without the benefit of funding for full-day Pre-K programs in the state, many parents are forced to make arrangements for their four year-olds after the two and a half hour programs are over. Of course, this inconvenience could be rectified if the state allowed unspent Pre-K dollars that currently revert back to the state education fund to be used to pay for full-day programs. In addition to making working parents' lives easier, full-day Pre-K programs have been shown to be more effective in a child's cognitive and social development than part-day programs. According to the publication *The Full-Day Advantage*, which I will provide for you, twice as many children who attend full-day Pre-K enter kindergarten at the proper academic level, as compared with peers without preschool experience. We need to provide young children every opportunity to learn and grow, not stand in their way by placing unwarranted restrictions on how funding can be used. I urge you to take a look at the full-day funding issue this next year. It is truly a barrier to access for many young children.

Three: After school programs. Older children also need a place to go where they can enjoy supervised care. After school programs for youth are vital to both cognitive and social development, but unfortunately there are not enough of them. According to the Afterschool Alliance, 517,000 children in the K-12 age range participate in after school programs—just 15% of the school-age population in New York State. For FY09, after school programs have already lost 4% of funding. During this fiscal crisis we expect more budget cuts, which will result in even fewer children participating in these valuable programs—and more parents scrambling for care.

Four: Transportation. Even if there were enough high-quality programs to meet demand, transportation is an issue. Children, especially very young ones, should not be shuttled all over town. And parents should not need to worry about making safe, cost-effective arrangements.

Five: Adolescent brain development. We know that teenagers do not learn best early in the day; they have difficulty concentrating, primarily because they require more sleep than younger children or adults. The current school day, which has most young people in classrooms at seven a.m., is simply setting youth up to fail. A later school start would result in improved attendance, better grades, and less frustration on the part of students and teachers.

And while I have your ear, I'd like to make a sixth point. Let me voice SCAA's support for eliminating out-of-school suspension. Out-of-school suspension, except when the student is a danger to him/herself or others, allows many young people to stay at home, often unsupervised, with plenty of free time—not exactly a punishment. This practice also results in students getting behind in their schoolwork. This may not seem like a flexible school week issue, but it is. Again, the research tells us that teens are ill-equipped at impulse control, self-regulation, priority-setting, decision-making, and appreciating the consequences of behavior. Were we to tailor the school day to better fit their needs, I think we would see a decline in problem behavior and, consequently, in suspensions.

As you can see, SCAA is in favor of flexible school week scheduling that supports the developmental needs of children and the practical needs of families. We would be pleased to work with you on this issue as you move forward.

I thank you for your time and am, as always, available and ready to provide additional information.