

Standardizing bell schedule reaps savings for the school district

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The Lake County School District was one step ahead of state requirements to add instructional time for the lowest performing schools based on its reading assessments.

The district adjusted its bell schedule, adding reading time to the day and saving \$1 million from its budget, according to School Board members.

“It would have forced us to make some deep cuts in the budget,” School Board member Tod Howard said.

David Christiansen, the district’s chief academic officer, said the decision to standardize the bell schedule was a critical one.

“We did not just want a few schools to have extra time,” he said. “We wanted all kids in Lake County to have additional instructional time at every level.”

The district added 20 to 30 minutes at every level, Christiansen said.

If the board had not made the change, he said, the district would have had to spend an extra \$1 million to pay employees for additional time and added transportation costs.

Christiansen said the board’s decision this past spring bodes well for the district.

“For us, it is a feather in the cap,” he said. “We were proactive and we got in front of this. We struck the right balance between instructional time and basically giving our teachers the time to plan and collaborate.”

Board member Bill Mathias said it “shows real leadership that we already recognized we were weak in reading and writing competencies.”