

14 Officials consider extending school day

BY KIMBERLY ATKINS

Who wants to stay after class? Students may not have a choice soon, thanks to \$425,000 in grants the state is shelling out to help districts plan for a longer school day or year.

Yesterday the Board of Education granted funding to 16 districts, including Boston, to consider boosting yearly in-class time by at least

30 percent.

School officials said the Expanded Learning Time grants allow educators to consider how the additional time would enhance the curriculum, giving all students access to programs now relegated to after school.

"We have made a lot of progress in the regular school day to improve academic performance, but many students still can't take advantage of

these other excellent opportunities," said Michael Sabin, principal of Edwards Middle School, one of seven Boston middle and K-8 schools that could have longer days starting next fall.

Currently, transportation and other issues often lead to underenrollment in after-school enhancement courses, accelerated programs and other alternative courses, Sabin said. A longer day "offers a way to give our entire school community access," he said.

If approved, schools would receive annual state funding to implement the programs starting next year.

The Boston Teachers Union submitted a letter to state officials supporting the grant proposal.

"We believe there are a number of teachers who would volunteer to serve in an extended-day program, and would welcome the additional pay that would come with it," said BTU spokesman Stephen Crawford.

The state board also approved grants for some schools in Cambridge, Fall River, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Malden, North Adams, Old Rochester Regional, Peabody, Randolph, Reading, South Middlesex Regional, Springfield, Ware and Worcester.