

# Blizzard Bags - FY'17

Spring 2017  
Results

# Participation Rates - Littleville

<b>Littleville Data (289 students)</b>	# of students that did not participate	% of students that participated
Blizzard Bag #1 12/12/2016	16	95%
Blizzard Bag #2 1/24/2017	24	92%
Blizzard Bag #3 2/7/2017	33	90%
Blizzard Bag #4 2/9/2017	34	89%
Blizzard Bag #5 3/14/2017	27	92%
Average		91.6%

# Participation Rates - Chester

<b>Chester Data (97 students)</b>	# of students that did not participate	% of students that participated
Blizzard Bag #1 12/12/2016	6	94%
Blizzard Bag #2 1/24/2017	9	91%
Blizzard Bag #3 2/7/2017	9	91%
Blizzard Bag #4 2/9/2017	6	94%
Blizzard Bag #5 3/14/2017	11	89%
Average		91.8%

# Participation Rates - MS/HS

Date	Middle School	High School
12/12/16	90.7%	93.3%
1/24/17	89.4%	85.2%
2/7/17	91.8%	89.6%
2/9/17	91.0%	84.4%
3/14/17	98.6%	99.1%
Average	92.3%	90.3%

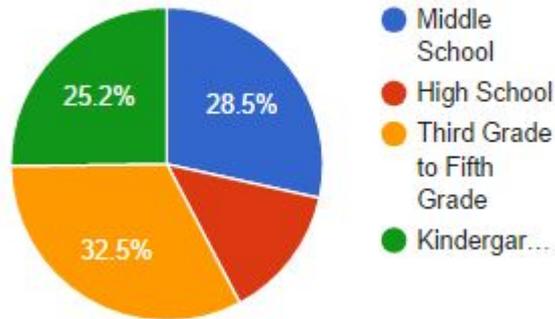
# Survey Responses

85 Parents: 28.5% Middle School; 13.8% High School; 32.5% 3 to 5; 25.2% K-2

29 Teachers: 51.7% Elementary; 37.9% Middle School; 10.3% High School

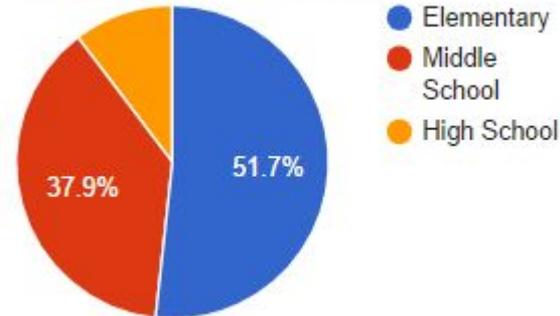
## Parent

Please check all grade levels that your children currently attend.



## Teacher

Please choose the level in which you spend the majority of your time working.



# Overall Sentiment

**We should expand the number of potential Blizzard Bag Days.**

Parents: 29.4%; Teachers 20.7%: Avg - 25%

**We should keep the number of Blizzard Bag days at 5**

Parents: 34.1%; Teachers 65.5%: Avg - 50%

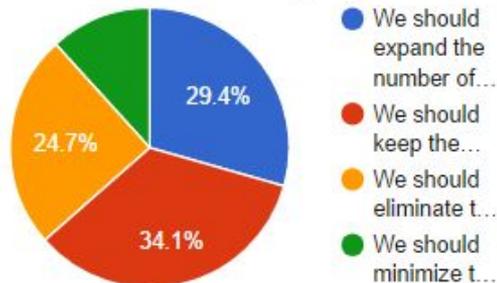
**We should eliminate the use of Blizzard Bags**

Parents: 24.7%; Teachers 6.9%: Avg - 16%

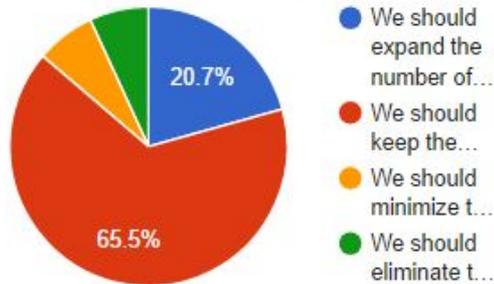
**We should minimize the number of days we use for Blizzard Bags**

Parents: 11.8%; Teachers 6.9%: Avg - 9%

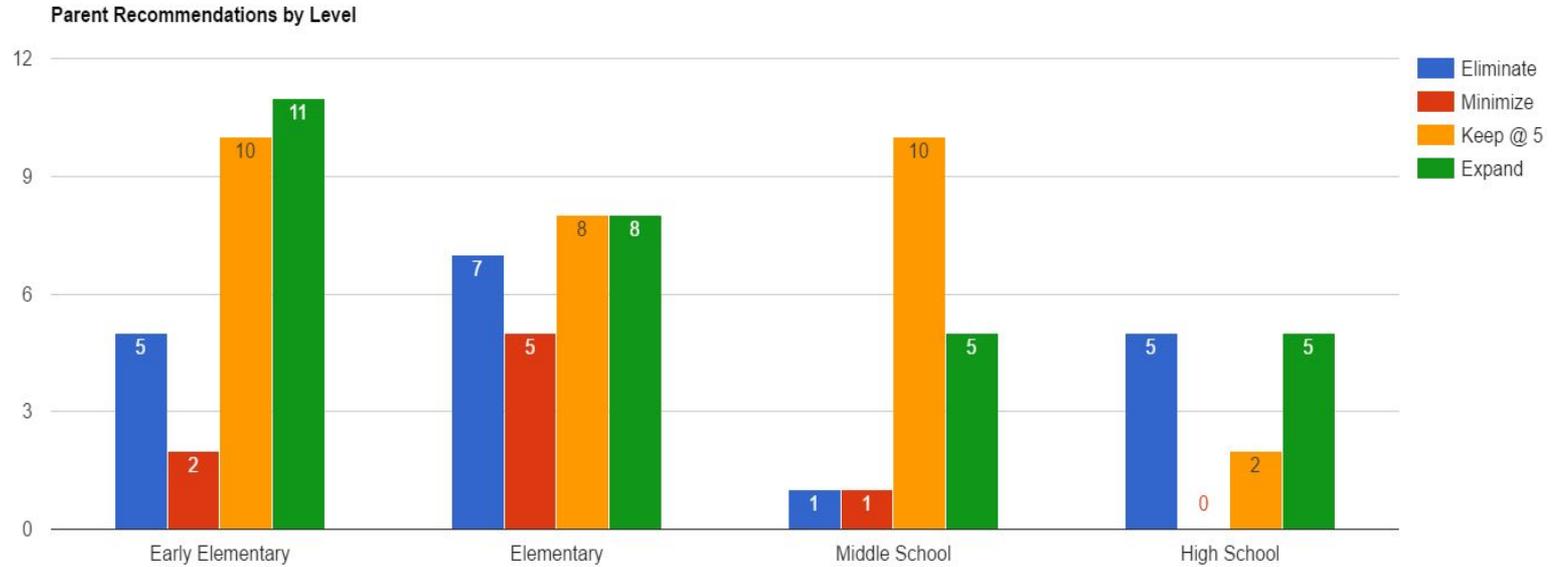
Select the statement that best embodies your sentiment about Blizzard Bag Days.



Select the statement that best embodies your sentiment about Blizzard Bag Days.



# Blizzard Bag Recommendations



Teacher (top 10 Avg. 3.3 / 4.0)	Parent (top 10 Avg. 3.0 / 4.0)
Students were required to put in the same amount of effort in completing Blizzard Bag Assignments as they did in my other assignments	My children completed the majority of their Blizzard Bag Assignments
I could create Blizzard Bag Assignments that were related to the curriculum I use for my subject area	Blizzard Bag Assignments were in a format that my children could use.
I support the idea that failure to complete a Blizzard Bag Assignment results in both no credit for the assignment as well as an absence from that class.	Five school days were sufficient for my children to complete the majority of their work
The assignment of Blizzard Bag Days for school cancellations were made appropriately	The assignment of Blizzard Bag Days for school cancellations were made appropriately.
Blizzard Bag Assignments were appropriate for my general education students.	Blizzard Bag Assignments appeared to be related to the curriculum used for my children's classes.
Blizzard Bag Assignments were completed by a majority of my students.	The assignments provided for Blizzard Bag Days were related to what my children were working on in the classroom.
Five school days were sufficient for the majority of my students to complete their Blizzard Bag Assignments	Over the course of the year, Blizzard Bags became easier to implement and understand
Over the course of the year, Blizzard Bags became easier to implement and understand	The assignments provided for Blizzard Bag Days were related to the curriculum rather than to current class activities.
Blizzard Bags would be easier to create and implement if district towns had widespread broadband available.	The assignments provided for Blizzard Bag Days were stand alone assignments
The assignments provided for Blizzard Bag Days were related to what we were currently working on in the classroom.	Blizzard Bags would be easier for my children to complete if district towns had widespread broadband available.

Teacher (Bottom Five - Avg. 2.6 / 4)	Parent (Bottom Five - Avg. 2.3 / 4)
The use of Blizzard Bags was appropriate to ensure a reasonable date for the end of the school year	The use of Blizzard Bags was appropriate if they saved the district money.
The use of Blizzard Bags saved the district money	The use of Blizzard Bags to save money and shorten the school year was worth the effort to prepare and implement Blizzard Bag Assignments.
The use of Blizzard Bags to save money and shorten the school year was worth the effort to prepare and implement Blizzard Bag Assignments.	The amount of time and effort I as a parent expended in helping my children complete their Blizzard Bag Assignments was equal to that I expend for their regular assignments.
The assignments provided for Blizzard Bag Days were stand alone assignments	I found that Blizzard Bag assignments were available to my children in both digital and non-digital formats
The use of Blizzard Bags to save money and shorten the school year was worth the loss of actual face time in the classroom.	The use of Blizzard Bags to save money and shorten the school year was worth the loss of actual face time in the classroom.

# Statements with the highest agreement

Statement	Standard Deviation
Blizzard Bag Assignments were completed by a majority of my students.	0.07071067812
The assignments provided for Blizzard Bag Days were related to the curriculum rather than to current class activities.	0.07071067812
The use of Blizzard Bags to save money and shorten the school year was worth the loss of actual face time in the classroom.	0.1414213562
Five school days were sufficient for the majority of my students to complete their Blizzard Bag Assignments	0.1414213562
The assignments provided for Blizzard Bag Days were related to what we were currently working on in the classroom.	0.1414213562
The use of Blizzard Bags was appropriate to ensure a reasonable date for the end of the school year	0.1414213562

# Statements with Least Agreement

Statement	Standard Deviation
I found that Blizzard Bag assignments were available in both digital and non-digital formats	0.4949747468
I support the idea that failure to complete a Blizzard Bag Assignment results in both no credit for the assignment as well as an absence from that class	0.5656854249
Blizzard Bag Assignments took an appropriate amount of time to complete for my children relative to work for a standard classroom assignment.	0.5656854249

# Related Comments: Electronic Formats

Teacher: have an online component or STEM activity; Student access to the internet would make a big difference in the amount of creativity that students could use to complete the assignments

Parent: Many of my child's assignments required access to the internet, while we have that luxury in our home, many families do not have internet access; I believe all assignments should be on paper so that each child is able to complete every assignment; Do not include online assignments as not all hilltowns have internet; Having both digital and hard copy of the assignments available; Having web-tutorial links available on school site for help with assignments (both to help students and their parents to understand assignments)

# Related Comments: Students needing extra help

Teachers: made accommodations for students who needed it; If students are struggling with completing the assignments, then maybe they should have modified assignments so that way it is not taking too long for them to complete; These would need to be collaborated more with the specialist teachers that work with their students; Allowing IEP or 504 students their extra time accommodation (if applicable) should be allowed... there should be something in writing to protect these students from being "absent"; Blizzard Bags are not effective for any student who regularly receives clarification/support with assignments in the classroom; if you could ensure that parents know how to assist with assignments or that there will be a responsible adult at home who understands the child's learning style and needs, then the child may have a chance; It may be appropriate to change the penalty for students on IEPs - ex: they get an absence for attendance but it does not have a negative effect on their grades (i.e. no penalty for the missed assignment)

Parents: Or an accommodation for extra time and help for children on 504's or IEP's; I think when the teachers create these assignments, they need to think of the students that have special needs who may not necessarily just sit down and complete an assignment; Children requiring extra help should receive it when back in the classroom and have access to their already arranged resources case by case

# Related Comments: Parent Help/Communications

Teachers: Send more information home to parents about the requirements; Provide an informational meeting for parents at open house outlining the expectations.

Parents: For me I think with some assignments it would've been easier if us, the parents, had some more directions. Sometimes it's difficult to help or teach when we have no idea on how to solve the problem ourself; Send home more instruction for parents. Just sending home an assignment sheet does not help us help our children; Let families know this is an option for extensions, if needed. Checklists may also be helpful; Better instructions and a more realistic time frame; Online resources for parents to access would be helpful; I think including a standard instruction sheet with each bag would be helpful. A simple review of guidelines, why we are doing it, and who to contact with questions would have helped some; I think with planning being done from the beginning of the year we will see more success in this area. Perhaps setting parent expectation about the goal for At-Home work would put some at ease. Explanation on how it was relating to class work would be helpful; Express the importance of completion to the students and parents - either turn in the assignments or take an unexcused absence for the day or class that was not turned in. (Unless, of course the student is excused by a parent with a note) - Continued next slide.

# Related Comments: Parent Help/Communications

Let parents know that teachers are available on the snow day for questions and help. I had a problem with the first one and posted a question on the Gateway Parents FaceBook page, hoping another parent could help me. I was surprised when my daughter's teacher responded through an e-mail to help me. It was great. I know not everyone has internet available to them, but it was helpful for me to know I could ask questions via e-mail; \*Having a help hotline phone number available for families that may not have internet available for questions (maybe available a couple hours on the snow day and a couple days after school following the snow day); Getting feedback from school after work turned in that it was received and child given credit for snow day; Have clear directions sent home for the parents so we know more about what's going on in the assignments; Clarify things for patents. I am fortunate that both of my children were able to navigate through themselves, so it was not necessarily a challenge for me, but I know some parents struggled; Explain just a little bit what parts of the current units each lesson relates to (most of the time it's obvious but it may help other parents to understand the assignments are not merely "busy work"); Give better, more thorough instructions; As a parent I find it hard to help my child with questions about the assignments. It would be helpful if teachers sent home something explaining how to help with the assignments, especially with math, parents were not taught common core math; Get rid of it due to Gateways ongoing lack of communication not all family's understood the program. Lack of communication as to what snow days were blizzard bag days. Horrible program!; Good communications from the teachers to parents as to what is expected; Further explain to families the importance of staying on track academically for finals, class progression, and testing. A greater understanding of how that does NOT occur on june 20-25th would help some families

# Related Comments: School Help

Teachers: The week that the student has to complete them maybe the teacher can work with them after school one day to help them complete the blizzard bag; Provide students with time before/after school or at recess time for additional help; Allow students to complete the work at school with teacher assistance. Maybe the library can be opened up with supervision for those students; Students could complete work at school with assistance if needed (elementary level during recess, specials, or before or after school...); Allow students to have some face time during the week following the snow day for assistance with some assignments.

Parents: It would be great if help was provided at the school, for children who are struggling to complete them; Help when back at school with an aide in classroom after reg work done; My 1st grader had Raz Kids assignments for blizzard bags yet the chosen books were below her reading level so she didn't have access to them.. there should be a separate assigned folder on raz kids for blizzard bag work with all necessary resources available without having to search everywhere; a web link for extra help or contact with the teacher to answer any questions; Give them time at school to get help and or finish; Just give extra time, end of month deadline; Maybe designating a time at school to assist the kids who have difficulty completing the bavs at home. Giving them a time to access online material clarify instructions or work in groups to complete assignments; I know in my house we did our best. I would image the teacher might pull the kid during recess if needed; If there is a blizzard bag day or days, have the teachers available after school, one day for an hour, within the time they are allowed to complete the assignment. This will allow the student to get extra help if needed; Offer help at school after the snow day for students that may need help or have questions; At the Middle and High School level teachers should give students basic rubric guidelines for grading criteria with each assignment; Have teachers be more available to help students with the work. IF they are getting the day to stay home, they should be able to give up an hour or two after school to make themselves available to assist students. Like an after school study hall.

# Selected Statements Against Blizzard Bags

Teachers: The line of thinking that says a blizzard bag assignment to do at home is the same as the type of assignment in the classroom is ignorant and is not supported by best practices in educational research. Furthermore it is in conflict with the district's "whole child" philosophy. You need a teacher for quality instruction. We have all taken online courses or those done at home, the quality and the integrity of the work/learning is not there. You are in denial if you think it is the same.

Parents: I did not choose to homeschool. Most families try to keep up a house, work full time (more) and have more than one child. Children are encouraged to have extra curricular activities. At the end of the day after dinner, cleaning up dinner, bath & drama When is there quality family time? Kids need 8 hours of sleep. Unfortunately there isn't time for parents to get their required sleep. If the parents are unable to find even more time the children are considered absent. I don't think that's fair; Not have them; Do away with them! Most parents needs to have their children in school longer. It is more important to make it easier for parents to have kids IN SCHOOL than to get out early for vacation; Stop using them; I think the work should be work that a student can do mainly on there own and should be work that they understand how to do on their own. I don't mind spending time with my son on his work but there were some blizzard bags where I had to spend way too much time helping and working on assignments with him. When I stay home from work on snow days with my son I am expected to get all the work I get done for my job on a normal day adding an hour or two to help with assignments is difficult to manage, also I am not a teacher I am not good at teaching and often find myself extremely frustrated helping him understand his assignments. I feel like getting frustrated is not healthy for our relationship; My answers are negative because I have nothing positive to say. However, I doubt my opinion matter.

# Selected Statements In Favor of Blizzard Bags

Teachers: Keep it going, the more we do it, the better we will get.

Parents: I thought they were great. I hope the district I work in adopts them as well!!; I have 3 children with IEPs and I love the blizzard bags; It was a creative idea and worked well. I am sure they will get even better next year. I bet other school districts will follow this model; Our student enjoyed the one long term assignment that she received. It was related to the curriculum, but was most likely not a project that they would of had time for in class. It gave the students more of a chance to explore the topic and offer their opinions on it while creating a finished project instead of just completing a worksheet; I thought the assignments were extremely creative and linked to curriculum already! Every subject offered well thought out lessons related to the curriculum, classroom work and the season; I believe this program was a wonderful addition to the district. It has allowed students to opportunity to keep up with their lessons during the working school year, instead of having them stay in hot classrooms in June, when the teaching for the year is already done. I hope this program continues in the future; While I understand the function of the blizzard bags I would rather go back to the regular snow day practice. Sadly the excitement of sleeping in and getting outside has gone as well as being a parent who has to remove the snow my time is limited to assist with the work. I found my children hoping not to have any snow day as they have become less exciting and not as much fun; Try our best, as parents, to help our kids complete the assignments before complaining about the assignments.

Teaching our kids is not just on the teachers/school. It should start at home and with a cooperative attitude. Everyone needs to work together for what would be in the best interest of the community as a whole. It was truly disgusting to see some parents reaction on social media. Many of our small towns already have high taxes/ and difficult budget, I am confident this helps the budget greatly; I think that blizzard bags are a great idea and should continue them!

# Suggestions from Comments

Teachers: Personally I would like to make mine more of an ongoing project rather than individual assignments; Provide as many hands-on activities/games that are both engaging and skill based; Competitions motivate my students sometimes (with a prize attached); I think it is important to make the expectations for the Blizzards Bags consistent for all the students; Ensure that all staff participate in providing assignments or modifications; ensure that all staff is participating whether or not they agree with the blizzard bag program. Or assisting teachers to modifying assignments as needed; Plan ahead and coordinate with specialists teachers/reading teachers, so that no one is scrambling the day before a storm

Parents: Provide a new concept to read through then go over in class on the next available school day; If blizzard bags are used to shorten the time in June, more options are needed for all students especially 5th grade and older students for summer camps within the district, the elimination /loss of afterschool and summer camps options for this age group is difficult. When other area districts are getting out later, no camps are available for working families until around June 29 or July 1st; My kids enjoyed the assignments that included stories about snowstorms, or involved making an art project of a snowman. You could include science projects that use everyday household products. Give the list out at the start of the year so everyone will be ready when the snow day comes. It can be easy things like making play dough or oobleck. Another option is no cooking recipes. Utilize what the students have at home and utilize the weather. Have them draw a picture of what the storm looks like outside a window; Use blizzard bags AFTER the 5 regular snow days have been used, not first! It should be a last resort, not the go to choice! And only one blizzard bag assignment should be outstanding at a time. In other words, only one bag assigned in a 5 school day period, no overlapping of bags; Keep implementing it, and the kinks will get worked out. Teachers will develop strategies with practice. I thought my kids had great blizzard bags, but I do wish there had been more work in them so it would have taken them longer to complete

# Estimated Savings

Transportation:	\$25,182 (Regular education transportation)
Transportation:	\$ 9,665 (Special education transportation)
Utilities:	\$ 7,230 (Electrical & heating costs)
Staffing:	\$ 6,840 (Food service staff and lunch aides)
Sub costs	\$ 6,465 (Based upon average daily sub cost)
Total:	\$55,382 (Approximately \$11,000 per day)

# District Summary

Participation Rate Exceeded 91%

\$55,000 estimated savings

75% of respondents - keep or expand program

Survey question responses primarily rated as agree/strongly agree

Assignments are related to curriculum

Five days was sufficient time to complete assignments but need to continue providing flexibility

Need to improve understanding of in school assistance and, during the blizzard bag day assistance

Need to focus on communications with parents

Need to maintain teacher flexibility but ensure that all staff participate and that appropriate assignments are provided to all students