



Backgrounder

Draft Proposed Balanced Calendar

There are two potential benefits from a more balanced calendar: improved student learning, and social benefits. The primary motivation for changing the calendar should be increased student learning. Social benefits to students and their families should also be considered. If any potential cost savings are realized, they should be regarded as a bonus.

As always, it is possible to find research that supports or criticizes any proposal. The notes below reflect a synthesis of a large body of research in order to provide as balanced a view as possible. The lists provide examples and are not meant to be exhaustive. The findings indicate a slight, but positive effect that favour balanced calendars.

Learning benefits include:

- A cumulative effect on student achievement. The longer students attended a balanced calendar school, the better they did
- Students did not forget as much over the breaks
- Teachers noted they needed to spend less time in review at the beginning of the year
- Particular advantage was found for students who require additional support, e.g. special needs, aboriginal, English Language Learners
- Remedial classes offered over breaks allow more immediate help to struggling students
- Principals report less overall stress, more collaboration, and greater motivation, less student discipline
- Better attendance

Social benefits include:

- Decreased vandalism
- Opportunities for families to travel/vacation at different times of the year without losing school time
- More regular visits to non-custodial parents
- Reported improved feelings of “wellness” for all

Possible disadvantages include:

- Availability of childcare
- Potential need for cooling systems for classrooms in the summer
- Changes to scheduling of regular cleaning of the school
- Possible impact on the secondary fall sports season
- Family impact for staff with children who live in another district
- Restricted summer employment opportunities for students

A final and interesting point is that in the studies done, all the stakeholders, teachers, parents, students, and other staff that have experienced both a balanced calendar and the regular school calendar are overwhelmingly positive about their experience with a balanced calendar.

A note regarding the attached proposal

Models for a truly balanced calendar often follow a pattern of 45 days in session, 15 days vacation; or, 60 days in session, 30 days vacation, repeated until the end of a twelve month school year.

The enclosed proposal is as close to a “balanced” calendar that can be achieved given restrictions presented by current provincial exam schedules and provincial non-instructional days. Some adjustments are still possible.

Questions for Discussion

- What advice do you have for us regarding the concept of moving toward a balanced calendar?
- What advice can you give us regarding the calendar that has been proposed?
- What modifications to this calendar would you propose? Why?