



# School District No. 36 (Surrey)

## Superintendent's Department

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Dear Parent / Guardian,

There is a growing discussion in B.C. and elsewhere about the shape of the traditional school year calendar and its relevance in today's world. The current school calendar was developed more than a century ago and is commonly believed to have been designed to primarily accommodate agricultural needs.

In our 21st century world, many are questioning the current "imbalanced calendar" with its nine or ten weeks of summer vacation and long stretches without significant breaks to pause, decompress and engage in family and other out-of-school activities. We also understand that the long summer gap has a negative impact on learning, particularly for students of poverty. The "learning loss" for these students is notable.

In Surrey, as in many other districts, we have policy that allows school communities to explore a local calendar option. Some schools have discussed the balanced calendar over the last few years.

The Surrey Board of Education and the district have not taken a position on the balanced calendar, but given the discussions that occur from time-to-time, they are interested in supporting a dialogue about the concept and in seeing what potential there may be to consider a district-wide balanced calendar approach in future years.

Senior staff has met with representatives from employee groups and parents to bring this item forward. One of the themes that emerged was that for such a discussion to have a chance to fully develop and for all aspects to be reasonably explored, sufficient time must be provided. With that in mind, the partner groups acknowledge that any discussions about a balanced calendar should appropriately use the 2011/2012 school year as an example for *illustrative purposes*.

A [draft calendar](#) for the 2011/2012 school year and some [explanatory notes](#) are available on the district website at [www.sd36.bc.ca](http://www.sd36.bc.ca). As this is a topic of growing interest in Canada and in other countries, there is no shortage of opinion, research and analysis of the potential benefits and deficits related to a local/balanced calendar.

The board will seek input through various community forum opportunities in the next several months. Discussion questions will include:

- *What overall advice do you have for the district as we consider the general concept of a balanced calendar?*
- *What advice can you give us regarding the specific 2011/2012 calendar being shared (available at [www.sd36.bc.ca](http://www.sd36.bc.ca))?*
- *What modifications would you propose to this calendar if you favour the general concept but see limitations with the model being shared?*

In the meantime, you are welcome to email your views to [calendarfeedback@sd36.bc.ca](mailto:calendarfeedback@sd36.bc.ca)

Sincerely,

Mike McKay  
Superintendent of Schools