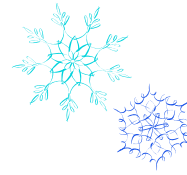


Connections



A message from the Superintendent of Schools

File: 8040-03 (RCSS)

December 1, 2009

"Please Post"

Local School Calendar – Options for Future Years

Colleagues,

Welcome to December. It seems remarkable that this year is moving so quickly and reminders of the winter season and Christmas are all around us. As the next three weeks will disappear even more rapidly, I am taking this opportunity to wish you well for a happy holiday season and the very best for 2010.

This Connections Bulletin is being shared to provide information regarding school calendar possibilities for coming years. We have received many questions regarding the potential for local calendar adjustments for 2010/11 and beyond. Having a common understanding of the variables will assist our staff and the broader community in discussions on this topic. Key information is as follows:

Regulations regarding local calendars: The School Act and its associated Regulations prescribe a *Standard School Calendar* for each year, with school beginning on the Tuesday after Labour Day and ending near the last day of June. Winter vacation, Spring Break and statutory holidays are identified in the standard calendar. Associated with this calendar is the requirement for hours of instruction. Legislation permits school districts to adopt a *Local Calendar* that varies from the *Standard Calendar*, as long as the hours of instruction are maintained and appropriate consultation has taken place. Decisions regarding school calendars must take place prior to the end of April each year so that schools can advise their parent communities of the specifics for the coming year. We recognize that last year the compressed timelines for feedback, decision making and related adjustments caused difficulties. It is the Board's intention to consider any local calendar modifications as early as possible and well in advance of the late April deadline. Please note that any variation from the *Standard School Calendar* must be considered and approved by the Board each year. In other words, a calendar change in one year is not automatically in place for subsequent years.



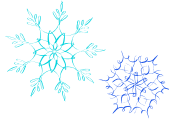
Surrey School District's Local Calendar 2009/10: This year's school calendar, with a reduction of 6 instructional days and an increase in the daily minutes of instruction, was adopted by the Board in April, 2009. It is in place for the current school year only. As you will remember, the impetus for this decision was financial. The Board identified significant cost savings from decreased need for replacement staff. Achieving such savings allowed the Board to sustain the resources provided in key areas, particularly supplementary support to schools in high needs neighbourhoods.

At this point, the Board has not made any decision about a potential *Local Calendar* to achieve budget savings for 2010/11. We know there will be substantial financial challenges in the coming school year and beyond. The Board's budget planning has already begun and moves to a more frequent and detailed level in January. Consideration of cost-saving initiatives will take place at that time.

Balanced Calendar Options: There is a growing discussion in B.C. and elsewhere about the shape of the school year and its current relevance in a post-agrarian age. In our 21st century world, many are questioning the current "imbalanced calendar" with 9 or 10 weeks of summer vacation and then 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.

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December 1, 2009



In Surrey, we have policy that allows school communities to explore a *local calendar* option; that discussion has begun in some schools. Consideration of a shorter summer break and longer pauses in the fall, winter and spring is underway, with attention to experiences in other jurisdictions related to learning gains and losses as well as efforts to decompress the system and alleviate some of the stressors that build as a result of long periods in the year without a significant break.

The Board is interested in supporting this dialogue and in seeing what potential there may be to consider a district-wide balanced calendar approach. Senior staff has met with representatives from our employee groups and parents to bring this item forward. Our initial meeting was open and thoughtful with a wide range of perspectives being shared. 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 attached for your interest and information. Over the next few weeks, we will provide references and resources to assist with the conversation. 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 forum opportunities in the next several months, with further steps regarding possible implementation being developed by November 2010. 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?*
- *What modifications would you propose to this calendar if you favour the general concept but see limitations with the model being shared?*

Acknowledgments: As I have the privilege to engage with learners and staff across the district, I continue to be grateful for the remarkable efforts made by so many toward our common goal. We can never forget the difference we make in shaping children's lives and in influencing the communities and the social fabric that will determine our shared future. Thank you for your contribution to that future and for the inspiration you bring to our commitment to *every child, every chance, every day.*

Respectfully,

Mike McKay
Superintendent of Schools

MMc/rr

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
Draft Potential Local School Calendar Proposal - 2011/12

(Revised November 27, 2009)

Draft

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T						
July					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Aug	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					
Sept				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			
Oct					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Nov		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
Dec			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
Jan						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Feb			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29					
Mar			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
Apr						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
May		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				
Jun			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				

Draft

-  = Weekends
-  = NID
-  = School Breaks/Vacation
-  = Admin Day
-  = School in Session

Semester 1 = 93 days
Semester 2 = 94 days



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?

