

Additional School Calendar Details

Some school systems are outright defying the current school calendar legislation (http://bit.ly/school_systems_rebel). Some public school systems have proposed changing their school calendars enough to define themselves as “year round” or “modified year round” (<http://bit.ly/NewHanover1>, <http://bit.ly/NewHanover2>). Other schools are moving to full-fledged year-around school calendars. For the 2016–17 school year, LEAs identified 104 schools as year-round schools (Wake County had 52), with additional schools starting to adopt year-round calendars in subsequent years. According to information from the NC School Board Association, just this past year, TWELVE new school systems moved to a year-round format. Additional info on school start and end dates can be found in the 9/5/2019 draft of the Report on School Start and End Dates (http://bit.ly/start_end_dates).

One of the biggest problems with current school calendar legislation (http://bit.ly/nc_calendar_law) revolves around the need for high schools to finish the fall semester before Christmas break. Below are potential advantages such a shift in the school calendar can offer, as described in the 2017 legislative School Calendar Flexibility Report: (http://bit.ly/calendar_flexibility_report)

- **Exams before winter break** (testing closer to teaching of material, better retention, better scores);
- **Aligning school calendar with community college calendar** (for taking classes, graduating & starting college early, easier scheduling for families with children in different schools/college);
- **Better scheduling of make-up days** (without taking time from Christmas holidays, Spring breaks);
- **More flexible placement of teacher workdays** (for professional development, as make-up days in cases of extreme weather).

In this same School Calendar Flexibility report, one scenario (Option D) for an adjusted calendar specifies a start date no earlier than August 10th and an end date no later than May 31st. Why August 10th? Otherwise, in some calendar years it would be practically impossible to squeeze in enough days to finish the semester without cutting substantially into Christmas break, as shown by drafts of possible School Calendars over the next 10 years: <http://travisday.com/calendar/drafts.pdf>. (Teacher workdays can be moved around as needed by administration without changing the school start and end dates for students.)

However, we could do better than ending school by May 31st for the school end date. A shift to the start date on the front end would allow school to end by the Friday before Memorial Day, so that Memorial Day weekend would officially kick off the summer each year. Schools would not need to remain open past Memorial Day unless they needed to make up days for catastrophic events like the hurricanes we have experienced in recent years.

A shift in the calendar could result in semesters with 90 school days in the fall semester before Christmas, and with 90 days in the Spring semester before Memorial Day. This plan would also result in summers which are on average slightly *longer* than with school calendars currently permitted under NC school calendar law.

<u>Average Lengths of Summer Permitted</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Weeks</u>
Current School Calendar Law	75.94	-	10.85
School Calendar Flexibility Report "Option D"	71.84	-4.10	10.26
Support Our Schools (Out by Memorial Day)	77.36	+1.42	11.05

Details of school start/end dates under various calendar options (and the resulting summer lengths) can be compared here: <http://travisday.com/calendar/summer.pdf>.

As of the writing of the calendar flexibility report in 2017, “Option D” was supported by all of the primary Education Organizations. But on the flip side, almost all of the Travel and Tourism Industry Organizations supported leaving the calendar as is. “Save Our Summers – North Carolina preferred the current school calendar law to options proposed by the Program Evaluation Division but also indicated that the organization was willing to discuss and consider other options not proposed in this report.”

Perhaps an additional “Support Our Schools” option could be a compromise that may deter other school systems across the state from trying to move to some form of year-round format. But for this to work, local businesses must be willing to give up an average of 15.52 summer days in late August in Exchange for gaining an average of 16.94 summer days right after Memorial Day. Is this tradeoff tolerable if it will help support our public schools and school families, and help avoid a move towards year-round schools?