Balancing the Calendar

A Preliminary Investigation and Informational Presentation
December 2, 2015 Community Forum

Agenda

Informational Presentation

Community Comments and Questions

Breakout Sessions
  K-6 – Lecture Room
  7-12 – Media Center

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Objectives

• To learn how a Traditional school calendar was developed and why a reform may be beneficial

• To discuss what a Balanced or Year-Round Education (YRE) Calendar is and how it works

• To identify the benefits and factors to consider of a YRE Calendar

History of the United States Educational System School Calendar

• Traditional school calendar in US based on agrarian lifestyle so children could help on the family farm/ranch.

• The idea of balancing the school calendar dates back to the 1840’s where schools in the big eastern cities were open 240-250 school days (Glines, 2009; Silva, 2007)

• Times have changed, thus our educational delivery system should change as well to keep pace.
What is a Balanced Calendar?

- Students at a Balanced Calendar school attend class the same number of days and receive the same curriculum as students at a Traditional Calendar school.

- A Balanced Calendar school is a rescheduling of the standard 180-day school calendar to keep the learning process continuous and to maximize the use of school facilities.

- Students have periodic, shorter breaks rather than one long summer break.

Difference between a Traditional and Balanced Calendar

A Traditional school calendar distributes a full year of instruction (approximately 175-180 days) over 9 months, with three months off during the summer (approximately 60 weekdays).

A Balanced school calendar or Year-Round Education Calendar evenly distributes a full year of instruction (standard 180 days) across 11 months with a shorter summer break and more frequent mini-breaks during the instructional year.
Calendar Comparison

Below is a side-by-side comparison of a traditional calendar and a balanced calendar. For comparison purposes only, we used the current 2015-2016 calendar for the traditional calendar (175 student instructional days) and the EXAMPLE 2016-2017 balanced calendar (state mandated increase to 180 student instructional days).

Educational benefits of moving from a Traditional to a Balanced Calendar

- Summer learning loss – is the loss in academic skills and knowledge over the course of a traditional three month summer vacation. The loss in learning varies across grade level, subject matter, and family income. A common finding across numerous studies is that on average, students score lower on standardized tests at the end of the summer than they do at the beginning of the summer (on the same test). Summer loss for all students is estimated to be equal to about 1 month but this varies by subject.
  - Summer Learning Loss Video
  - Summer Loss: Greater in math than reading
  - Summer Loss: Greatest in math computation and spelling

Educational benefits of moving from a Traditional to a Balanced Calendar (continued)

- Summer vacation increases disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged student’s reading scores (often these students lack the enriching out-of-school opportunities available to their more affluent peers)
  - District Free/Reduced = 40%
  - Building Free/Reduced = 45%, 50%, 43%, 42%, 33%

- The detrimental effect of summer vacation increases as grade level increases

- Continuous instruction and learning is the means to a goal of greater student achievement and overall success


Intersession (Intercession) – The 10 day breaks that occur after each 45-day period of school that provide an opportunity to offer extra help to students who are struggling. It also allows for enrichment activities for students that cannot be offered during the traditional school day (i.e. Clubs, Athletic Camps, Fine/Performing Arts Camps, etc.).

Examples of Additional Intersession Activities –
- Elementary Level – Targeted instructional support, computer aided instruction, clubs, camps
- Secondary Level – Reading block interventions, STEM activities, SAT/MME prep, community service projects aligned with project-based learning, field trips
Educational benefits of moving from a Traditional to a Balanced Calendar  (continued)

**Instruction** – The key to quality instruction is planning and assessment. The 45-day periods of instruction would provide teachers with manageable blocks of time for effective unit planning, collaboration, and professional learning opportunities. The breaks offer the time needed to reflect on student progress and to prepare for the next 45 day period (i.e. remediation opportunities, special interest instructional opportunities, gifted/talented instruction, etc…). Increased continuity of student support services.

**Quicker Intervention** - the breaks offer teachers time to reflect upon student achievement progress and to prepare for the next 45-day period.

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**Educational benefits of moving from a Traditional to a Balanced Calendar** (continued)

**Staff Development** – the greatest factor in the quality of education our students receive is the quality of instruction provided. Currently staff development occurs after school, in the summer or by pulling teachers out of school. Conducting professional development during breaks would be a more effective approach.

**Stress and Burnout** – We are in an era of high expectations and accountability for student and teacher performance. The consistent cycle of breaks throughout the school year would enable students and teachers to rest, re-energize, re-new and re-focus so that they can perform their best work.

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Educational benefits of moving from a Traditional to a Balanced Calendar (continued)

**Student Behavior** - Research studies indicate that students who attend school on a balanced calendar demonstrate improvement in school attendance and behavior as well as academic achievement. Immature and academically at-risk students can handle 9-week blocks better than 18 week blocks and benefit from the shorter breaks.

**Student Motivation** – student engagement is increased.

**Student and Staff Attendance** – higher attendance rates for students. Fewer teacher absences therefore fewer teacher substitute days.

Flexible vacation options for families.

Greater flexibility for parents in planning holidays as well as minimizing the impact of finding daycare for more extended periods of time over the summer.

Children may get bored with three months off in the summer. Parents who have experienced the 5 week summer vacation report that it seems to be just about the perfect amount of time off for both children and parents.

Changing and evolving lifestyles, working contexts, and community involvement relate less to the traditional calendar.
SurveyComments to Date

- Absence of air-conditioning in older schools
- Child care concerns / parent custody arrangements
- Potential conflict with other surrounding districts
- Continuing education coursework for teachers may be difficult to pursue in the summer (though many are taking online classes)
- Change is difficult to adapt to with so many unknowns
- Intercession staffing costs – grant funding
- Impact on Career Tech programming, college partnerships
- Impact on athletics, extra-curricular activities (FFA, Band)
- Reduced summer employment opportunities for students

SurveyComments to Date

+ Better road conditions (June and August)
+ Transporting in daylight more days of the year
- Smaller window for construction projects
+ Typical summer maintenance/cleaning projects scheduled throughout year
+ Greater flexibility for some families
+ Increased student engagement
+ Will reduce burnout and stress with frequent breaks
? Impact on graduation, summer college course enrollment, military service commitments
Example Calendars

2017-2018: 180 Student Days 185 Teacher Days 25 Intersession Days

2017-2018: 185 Student Days 190 Teacher Days 25 Intersession Days

2018-2019: 185 Student Days 190 Teacher Days 25 Intersession Days

More Information?

Need more information? Visit: http://www.charlottenet.org/balanced_calendar.html

Email: contactus@charlottenet.org

Call: (517) 541-5102

Have you completed the Community Survey? Survey

References: Hornak, David; Hunter, Ann; Martin, Dedrick; Talison, Josha

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Break Out Session Goals

• Respectfully share and seek information
• Identify risks and/or rewards with the concept of the calendar chance
• Identify opportunities for students
  • Enrichment
  • Credit Recovery
  • Grade Level Standing
  • Increased Success/Performance/Achievement for Students and District

K-6: Please move to the front of this room
7-12: Please move to the media center