

Fast Facts

Alternatives to the Traditional School-Year Calendar

What —

The CEEP policy brief "Alternatives to the Traditional School-Year Calendar" by Shaun P. Johnson and Terry E. Spradlin describes year-round education and extended-year calendars as two distinct ways to re-organize the use of time in public schools. The brief also presents research on the effectiveness of these calendar modifications as well as their current implementation in Indiana.

Why —

The traditional school calendar is based on customs and practices that date back more than 100 to 150 years. Meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population has inevitably become more complicated. It is therefore essential to consider new and innovative ways to structure the academic school year. Although research on the overall benefits of alternative school calendars tends to be mixed, there is growing support nationally for the reconfiguration of academic schedules to improve student achievement.

How —

The Superintendent of Indianapolis Public Schools, Dr. Eugene White, recently embraced the need for alternative school calendars by extending the school year from 180 to 210 days in four struggling middle schools with a collective enrollment of approximately 2,000 students. There are currently 21 schools in Indiana that implement some form of extended or year-round school calendar with a collective enrollment of about 8,000 students. Provisions in the Indiana Code currently allow for modifications to the traditional school calendar without mandating any specific types of reform.

Recommendations for choosing alternatives to the traditional school calendar:—

- Comprehensive research must be done on a longitudinal basis as to the benefits of modifying the school year to an extended or year-round calendar.
- Clarity must be sought as to the ultimate goal of any calendar modification. For instance, cutting costs or raising student achievement will affect the type of calendar change that is most suitable for any district.
- Extending the school year or year-round education are precisely the kinds of innovative reforms that can meet the demands of a swift-changing student population. However, before such significant changes are implemented, it is essential to guarantee that the current use of time is effective before modifications are implemented.

To read this Education Policy Brief, go to:
<http://ceep.indiana.edu/>