



# The Pros and Cons of Year Round School

## Is Going to Year Round School a Good Idea?

By Amanda Morin

### Is year round school a good idea?

Would year round school or a longer school day solve our nation's concerns about school performance? Would it help to produce more globally competitive citizens? It is questions like these that lay at the heart of debate about whether or not to have longer school days or to make school a year round institution.

### Why Have Year Round School?

Many who argue for year round school believe that more is better. United States President Barack Obama is among them. "The challenges of the new century demand more time in the classroom," he stated.

Frederick M. Hess, Director of Education Policy Studies for the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, notes that few countries offer more than seven consecutive weeks of vacation for students--as opposed to the United States' average of thirteen weeks. Hess suggests that following the agrarian calendar is an anachronistic way of running schools.

### What Does the Research Say About Year Round School?

Not all educators agree that more time is better and the research, including studies published in the *Economics of Education Review* (2008); *Phi Delta Kappan* (2007) and research conducted by Elena Silva, a policy analyst at Education Sector, back them up.

In fact, all of these studies found that for most students there is no correlation between the length of the school day or year and academic achievement. What they did find, however, was that how the time in the classroom was spent was incredibly important. In other words, it's not how long kids are in the classroom, it's how engaged in learning they are while there are there.

## **The Pros of a Year Round School or Longer School Day**

- Shorter summer breaks mean students are less likely to incur summer learning loss, which may decrease the number of students being served by intervention programs.
- Remediation needs can be addressed during the school year as opposed to during summer programs, possibly decreasing retention rates and decreasing the need to include summer school in local budgets.
- Vacation time can be more evenly distributed throughout the year, making it easier to schedule family vacations and giving students opportunity to regenerate more frequently. This may cut down on the need to re-teach skills after long vacations, allowing teachers to use classroom time more efficiently.
- Families who struggle to find childcare or pay childcare expenses will benefit from such programs as will children who are in sub-par childcare during summer vacation or afterschool.
- The school system would be more like that of other countries, providing students with the ability to have a more global educational experience.
- Multi-tracking systems, those in which groups of students are on different school schedules, may allow for more school consolidation.
- Students with lower test scores increase academic skills with more instructional time. (Silva, 2007)

## **The Cons of a Year Round School or Longer School Day**

- School maintenance costs, including day-to-day upkeep and utilities, can increase up to 10 percent if schools are open for longer. (Silva, 2007).
- Students who have difficulty with attention, either due to disability or because young elementary students are not developmentally ready to attend for longer periods of time, are unlikely to get more out of a longer school day. This, too, may increase the amount of behavioral issues in the classroom.
- Teens who need to work to help support themselves or make money for college may have difficulty holding or finding a job. (Silvernail & Bickford, 2009)
- Budgets and staffing issues simply may not allow for extended school programs. Many schools already struggle to pay teachers a competitive wage, making it hard to keep high quality teachers. The cost of teaching as a full-time endeavor may not be feasible either locally or federally.
- Multi-tracking programs mean that parents could possibly have students on different schedules.
- After school activities, such as sports or the arts, may suffer or get lost in the shuffle (or budget) if school days are longer.
- Students in year round school may miss out on opportunities to spend time with children of other ages and/or learn about nature as typical summer camp experiences may no longer be a part of the childhood experience.

### **Resources:**

Baines, L. (2007). *Learning from the world: Achieving more by doing less*. Phi Delta Kappan. Oct. 2007, 98 - 100.

Hess, F. (April, 2009). *To Fix Education, School Hours and Money Need to Be Better Spent*. U.S. News & World Report, Retrieved September 29, 2010

Silva, E. (2007). *On the clock: Rethinking the way schools use time*. Washington, D.C.: Education Sector.

Sims, D.P. (2008). *Strategic responses to school accountability measures: It's all in the timing*. Economics of Education Review, 27, 58-68.

Silvernail, D. & Bickford, R. (2009). *Extended School Year Fast Facts*. University of Southern Maine: Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation.

**Source:** <http://childparenting.about.com/od/schoollearning/a/year-round-school-pros-cons.htm>