

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 905

EA 026 618

TITLE Rethinking the School Calendar. A Report of Maine's Task Force on Year Round Education.
INSTITUTION Maine State Dept. of Education, Augusta.
PUB DATE Jan 94
NOTE 69p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; Community Support; Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Flexible Scheduling; Quarter System; *School Schedules; Statewide Planning; Trimester System; Vacation Programs; *Year Round Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Maine

ABSTRACT

This report by Maine's Task Force on Year-Round Education to the State Board of Education explores the feasibility of changing the school calendar--to distribute instructional time over more calendar months in order to enhance student learning. The new schedule could reduce teacher and student absenteeism, limit the loss of learning during summer break, increase staff-development options, enhance student success, and provide opportunities for enrichment and remediation. The introduction describes year-round education (YRE) and illustrates single- and multi-track systems. The second section provides a historical overview of school calendars nationwide and in Maine, reviews literature, and outlines advantages and disadvantages of YRE. In the third section, the task force endorses alternative school calendars that are carefully tailored to the academic needs and interests of students. Planning and implementation strategies are presented in the fourth section. The next section offers answers to the questions mostly frequently asked by students, teachers, parents, administrators, and business/community members. In conclusion, YRE is an approximately 180-day alternative school calendar designed to meet the needs of a community. The most important element in implementing such a program is community involvement and support. A glossary, 11 tables, 1 figure, and a list of state and district resources are included. (LMI)

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RETHINKING THE SCHOOL CALENDAR

**A Report of
Maine's Task Force on Year Round Education
January 1994**

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Acknowledgements

Maine's Task Force on Year-Round Education gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following individuals who contributed to this document:

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State Board of Education

STATE HOUSE
STATION 23
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

January 12, 1994

Members of the State Board of Education
State Board of Education
State House Station #23
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear State Board members:

On behalf of the Task Force on Year-Round Education, we are pleased to forward to you the report of the Task Force entitled, Rethinking the School Calendar.

The Task Force has found the examination of Year-Round Education to be an exciting and valuable opportunity for studying and reflecting on the impact of the school calendar on student learning. We acknowledge, with appreciation, the work of the Year-Round Utilization of School Facilities Task Force for identifying year-round education as a subject worthy of study, and the willingness of the State Board of Education to pursue this exploration.

Many of the members of the Task Force, which is a broadly representative and diverse group of people concerned with education, had served on the Year-Round Utilization of School Facilities Task Force. Other Task Force members requested an opportunity to participate in the study because of their interest in the subject. As a whole, the Task Force members have been unusually committed individuals who have made attendance at Task Force meetings a priority of their time, volunteered to serve on panels to discuss year-round education at educational conferences, and actively participated in writing this report.

The Task Force has explored the opportunities and challenges of converting to a year-round calendar. To accomplish this study, it sought input from educators, students, school facilities personnel, representatives of Maine's tourist industries, other business representatives, year-round

education historians, and people involved with school restructuring efforts. In addition, the Task Force sponsored a conference on year-round education in September 1993, attracting teams of school personnel from throughout the state.

The premise of the Task Force's work has been to explore the value of changing the school calendar to better distribute instructional time over more of the calendar months so that student learning may be enhanced. Responses to the concept of year-round education have been generally positive. While people have reservations about specific aspects of changing the school calendar, the focus on student learning has been widely supported. The value of an alternative calendar should be explored by all Maine school systems concerned with reducing student and teacher absenteeism, limiting loss of learning during the summer break, increasing the options for staff development, enhancing student success, and providing opportunities for enrichment and remediation.

We believe that year-round education is fully compatible with Maine's Common Core of Learning and its inherent recognition of the learning capabilities of all children. Since rethinking students' instructional opportunities is fundamental to the concepts of Maine's Common Core of Learning, the year-round calendar should be seen as an opportunity to provide a supportive framework for students challenged with the task of achieving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for success in a changing world.

Educators and citizens throughout the state will find information in this report which will entice them to undertake a local examination of the advantages of an alternative school calendar. We recognize that different modifications may be appropriate for different communities, but the examination of the advantages of such a change will focus discussion on strategies to improve the instructional opportunities for students.

Sincerely,



Marjorie M. Medd
Co-Chair

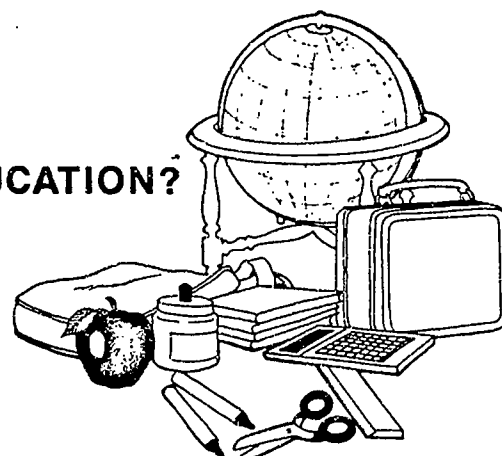


Polly S. Ward
Co-Chair

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION?



One **common misconception** about year-round education is that it requires students to attend school a greater number of days throughout the year. This is not true. In fact, students attending year-round schools typically do so for the same number of days -- about 175 to 180 overall -- as students attending traditional nine-month calendar schools. So then, what *are* the differences between traditional and alternative calendar schedules?

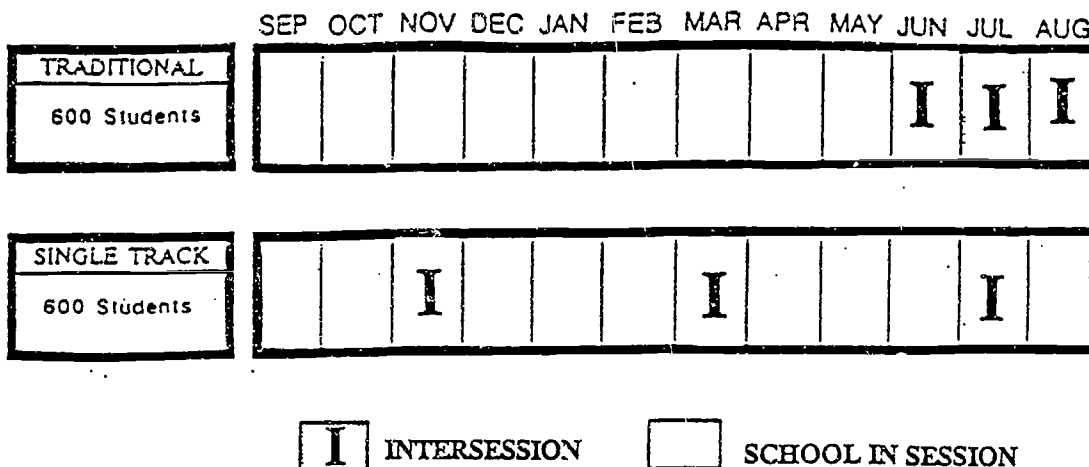
Students on a traditional calendar usually attend school for a nine to nine-and-a-half-month period, followed by a two-and-a-half to three-month summer vacation. On a year-round calendar, the extended summer vacation is



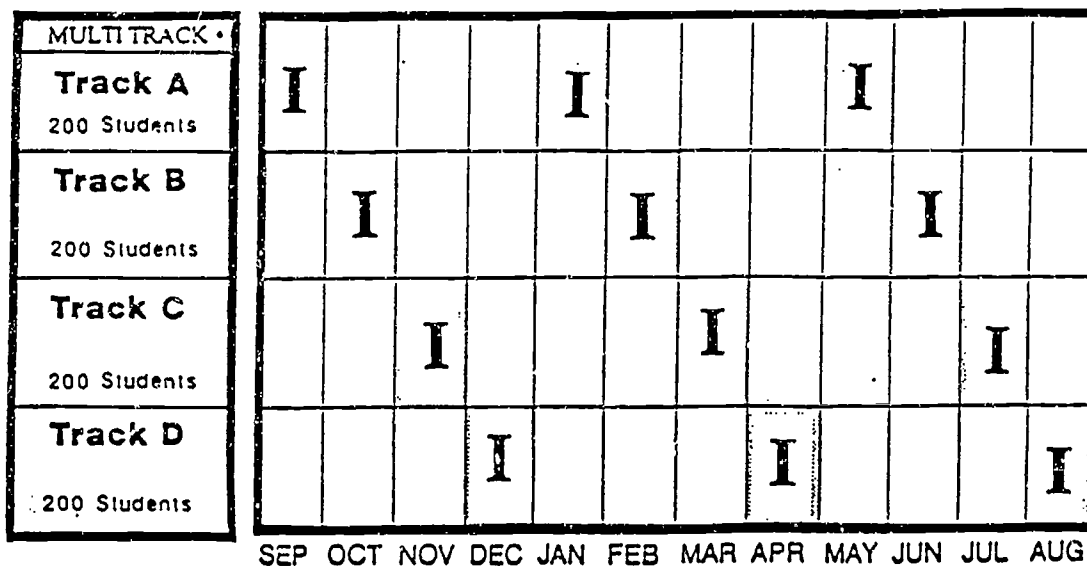
usually divided into three shorter vacation periods, called "intersessions," which are spread out over the school year. **Although students on an alternative calendar receive shorter summer vacations, their total amount of vacation/intersession time remains the same as for students on a traditional calendar.** Year-round students typically receive three one-month vacations, four three-week vacations, or some combination of these, during one academic year. In addition, all other traditional holidays remain the same.

Year-round schools can be operated on different "track" systems or schedules. A **single track** system provides for the entire school population to follow the same academic and vacation calendar. Therefore, the school is usually closed during vacation/intersession periods. The following illustrations demonstrate the

difference between a traditional calendar and a **single track**, three-month-cycle calendar for a school with 600 students:



On a **multi-track** system, students and teachers are grouped into different tracks or schedules, with staggered instructional blocks and vacation/intersession periods. This system increases the physical capacity of the school because while one track is on vacation, another track can use its space. In the case of a four-track system, for example, three of the tracks -- or three quarters of the school's student/teacher populations -- will be in school at any one time, while the remaining track -- or one quarter of the school's students and teachers -- will be on vacation. Below is an illustration demonstrating a scheduling option for a school of 600 students on a **four-track** calendar:



YEAR ROUND EDUCATION . . .

. . . *IS!*

180 Day Academic Year
(9 months)

3 months vacation
(nonconsecutive), including
one month during the summer

Alternative Schedule for
Learning

~Same types of

Programs
Classes
Amount of instruction

Plan for Continuous Learning

3 months instruction
followed by 1 month vacation

Same Costs

*~*Personnel
*~*Materials
*~*Food Service
*~*Transportation

. . . *IS NOT!*

260 Day Academic Year
(12 months)

No vacations
No holidays

Alternative Curriculum

~Different types of

Programs
Classes
Amount of instruction

Plan for Learning Loss

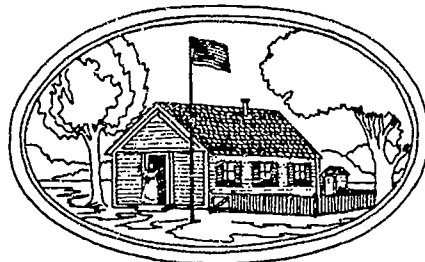
9 months instruction
followed by 3 months
vacation

Additional Costs

*~*Costs increase only if
intersessions are used
for "other" activities

OVERVIEW

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT of School Calendars in the U.S.



Considerable variation has always existed among school calendars throughout the United States. During the mid-1800's, schools in large cities were open eleven or twelve months of the year, although few students attended for the entire period. In contrast, most rural schools during this era were operated for only three to six months of the year. Several factors influenced this arrangement. First, since 85% of the population was engaged in agriculture, children were needed to help with the demands of running and maintaining family farms; second, inefficient transportation methods prevented an easy means of getting children to school; and finally, weather conditions and poorly maintained roads prohibited many students from attending school except during the late fall and early spring. It is clear, then, that in the early days of schooling the rationale for the length of the calendar was determined by cultural requirements, geographic location, transportation and climate.



By the turn of the century the overall population of the country had increased, causing the development of more cities and towns. Transportation improved, industry flourished, and compulsory schooling increased. Consequently, additional schools were built to make education more accessible to a larger segment of the population. In addition, the organization and management of schools grew in importance and gained more social attention. During this era, the length of the school calendar generally decreased in cities and increased in rural areas, thus



creating a degree of uniformity in the length of the school year. In spite of these changes, however, tremendous variation in the length of the school year continued to exist across the country and even within states.

Historians have noted that creative calendars existed within a number of schools during this same time period. Summer "vacation schools" and schools with multitrack calendars were designed to accommodate overpopulation, thereby becoming the forerunners of the concept of year-round education. Later, during the decades preceding World War II, a greater variety of calendar schemes came into existence. During the war effort, however, emphasis on national unity brought about the demise of year-round education trends and stimulated the emergence of our current September to June, 170-180 day calendar.



HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT of School Calendars in Maine



The evolution of school calendars in Maine has generally paralleled those throughout the U.S., having been affected by the same social, technological, and political forces. Before the emphasis on national unity brought about the current conformity, school calendars of individual Maine communities were remarkably inconsistent.

One historic source reveals that during portions of the 1700's, Wells and Topsham had schools in session for the full fifty-two weeks of the year. York, on the other hand, had a school calendar lasting three months, and Biddeford had one lasting four. In the 1820's, Gouldsboro provided for two months of school, while Portland provided for the entire twelve months. Due to an absence of transportation for students, many towns held school in different locations throughout the year. This was true of Wells in 1724, when six months of school was held in the middle of town, and three months was held at each end.

Woolwich in 1801 had six school "districts" in order to accommodate different areas of town, with each district being in session at different times; one for as few as twenty-five days, another for as many as seventy-four days of the year. Vacations were also designed on a strictly individual basis, lasting for any variety of lengths and occurring in virtually any month. (*)

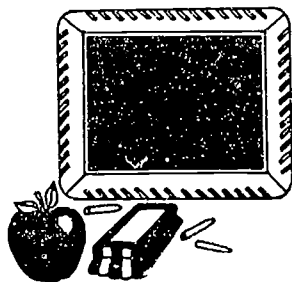


A form of alternative school calendar has existed in Maine for generations. Since the 1800's, towns in Aroostook County have maintained a degree of autonomy

from the rest of Maine by accommodating the cultural and economic needs of their own region. For years many schools in Aroostook County had vacations from June to October so that children could assist with the potato harvest. Although vacation periods have been altered in more recent years, reflecting improved agricultural technology and changing social needs, the majority of County schools today begin in August, with a two-to-four week autumn recess for the harvest.

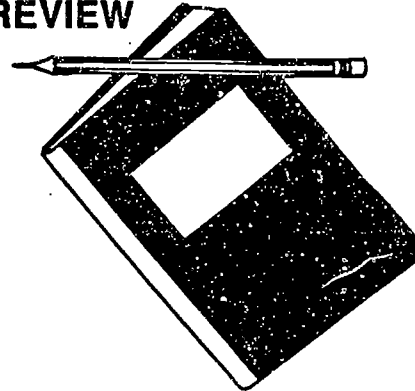


Towns in Aroostook County continue to re-evaluate the changing needs of their communities and attempt to adjust their school calendars accordingly. Like towns throughout the rest of Maine, however, Aroostook County continues to grapple with a school calendar that does not provide the kind of balanced patterns described elsewhere in this report.



(*) Chadbourne, Ava Harriet (1936), **A History of Education in Maine**, Lancaster, PA: The Science Press Printing Co., Inc.

LITERATURE REVIEW



Introduction

Year-round education is a redistribution of the school days students normally attend; it does not mean an increase in the school year. There are several variations of year-round calendars. In some communities students may be on a 45/15 calendar, which means attending school for forty-five days, or nine weeks, and then having fifteen days, or three weeks, of vacation. Other schools use a 60/20 or 60/15 calendar, and some schools have designed calendars specifically to meet the unique needs of their community. Larger school systems may use a multi-track calendar to increase school capacity, while smaller schools may have all students enrolled on a single track. Depending on the multi-track chosen, one-fourth to one-third of the students may be on vacation at a given time, thereby increasing the school's capacity by 25% or 33%.

Background

The U.S. has over twenty years experience in year-round education, with a body of literature consisting mostly of reports by school districts, education associations, and state departments of education. Some studies have investigated the feasibility of year-round education, while other school reports assess the impact of implementing year-round schooling. Although feasibility studies have suggested many advantages to year-round education and impact reports have largely supported the actuality of those advantages, few comprehensive studies of year-round schooling conducted by non-affiliated, objective researchers can be found. (1)

Several reasons for the minimal amounts of research have been suggested. (2) It is difficult to find comparable groups of students and control all of the variables related to school achievement so that the effect of changes in the school calendar can be isolated. Funding is often not available to conduct comprehensive studies which involve the use of comparative analysis and the monitoring of students as they move through the grades.

Early literature reviews concluded from school evaluation reports that students in year-round schools did not seem to have an achievement advantage when compared to students in traditional schools. (3) (4) A possible explanation may be that when school districts are asked to evaluate new programs in the early stages of implementation, conclusions may be drawn before all transition issues have been addressed.

Later school reports have found a positive impact on school achievement for students in year-round schools. Oxnard, California, for example, has been gradually converting schools to a year-round calendar. With about 80% of the students in year-round schools, Oxnard has found that scores on state achievement tests in reading, writing, and mathematics improved for year-round students. A rural high school in Virginia, which follows a calendar of four 12-week quarters, found that scores on state-mandated tests increased between eight and nineteen percentile ranks in all areas. (5)

One of the few objective studies of year-round education was commissioned by Bethel School District, Spanaway, Washington. After six years of year-round education, Bethel School District requested an evaluation of the program by a study team from Washington State University, College of Education. The study consisted of surveys of parents, students, teachers, and certified staff specialists to determine perceptions about educational quality, student learning, and preferences for continuance of the year-round schedule. Achievement scores and student attitudes of the year-round school were compared with scores and responses of students in a similar school on a traditional calendar. The evaluation study concluded that parents and students generally felt that the year-

round school was comparable to the traditional school in terms of the amount of learning and the quality of education. Scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) also indicated that the two schools were comparable in achievement. (6)

A study conducted by the University of Southern California found that students in year-round schools in California produced better CTBS scores than their counterparts in non-year-round schools. (7) The findings of a report published in 1993, analyzing thirteen recent research studies on year-round education, found that the overall results supported year-round education. (8) In seven of the studies the achievement results in favor of year-round education were statistically significant. Two studies suggested that the year-round calendar was beneficial to educationally disadvantaged students. The researcher concluded that recent evaluation reports have found achievement advantages for students in year-round schools.

California initially began year-round schools to alleviate overcrowding, but now the state believes that it also promotes educational achievement. Because of this belief, California encourages year-round education by allocating an additional per-student stipend to schools with year-round programs.



Other Educational Advantages

In addition to achievement, schools have considered other educational issues of year-round education. An increase in attendance of both students and teachers has been one unexpected result reported by many districts using a year-around calendar. The increase is attributed to more frequent vacations and, as a result, a decreased use of sick days. (9) Jefferson County, Colorado schools found that their high school drop-out rate decreased from 5% on the traditional calendar to

2% on the year-around calendar. School officials suggested that the opportunity to rejoin one's class after missing one of the shorter instructional terms, rather than a whole semester, may encourage students to rethink their decision to leave school. (10)

Some schools have also chosen to use vacation periods as intersessions during which students may make up deficient work, enroll in an enrichment class, or take a pre-learning class before tackling a difficult subject in the next instructional period. Creative use of the intersession has had a positive effect on student attitudes toward school. (11) (12)

A frequently cited reason for changing to a year-round calendar is the expected improvement in learning retention. With a traditional calendar, teachers usually spend the first two or three weeks at the beginning of a new school year reviewing learning from the past year. Learning loss over the summer is greater for disadvantaged students than for advantaged students. The level of loss depends on the learning environment in the home and the types of summer activities available to students. Disadvantaged students may forget as much as three months of learning over the summer, and over a three-year period this means that an entire year may be "forgotten." (13) Shorter times between instructional periods means that learning is more continuous and retention of information is increased. (14) (15) Continuous learning reduces the time needed for review and by doing so, can extend the number of instructional days without extending the number of actual school days. (16) (17)

A Vermont school superintendent, consulted by the Task Force, suggests that year-round schools make better use of instructional time because there is less wind-down time just before school vacations and at the end of the year. He believes that the equivalence of as many as six weeks of instructional time may be added to the school year while still adhering to the 180 day year. Using the newly found instructional days to provide greater opportunities for student-initiated projects and more time for class discussions and enrichment activities can deepen the students' knowledge of the areas under study.

Schools today provide a safe and protective environment for many students. Too many children have little to do and no place to go, particularly during the summer months. They are frequently left unsupervised while their parents are at work. The combination of boredom and lack of supervision over an extended period of time can lead to trouble for some youngsters. A year-round calendar with shorter, but more frequent, vacations reduces some of the boredom. If schools provide enrichment or remedial classes during the intersessions, they can also provide more supervision for students who do not normally attend summer camps or other supervised summer activities. (18)

Advantages and disadvantages of year-round schools will differ depending on the use of single or multi-track calendars. In addition to expanding the capacity of school buildings, multi-track calendars can provide additional employment opportunities by using off-track teachers as substitutes. The use of certified teachers as substitutes can positively affect learning in the absent teacher's classroom. The availability of qualified substitutes may also provide more staff development opportunities for teachers. Multi-track schools require more complex school organization, and many schools have added assistant principals to assist in school management. Multi-track schools usually mean that some teachers are not assigned their own classroom and may rove from classroom to classroom as tracks change. In this case storage and classroom set-up present additional challenges. Single track calendars eliminate most of the disadvantages of multi-track calendars, but they do not provide extra employment opportunities for teachers and do not increase the building capacity.



Economic Considerations

The major economic advantage of year-round schools is the increase of building capacity, thereby eliminating the demand for new school construction. Schools that have changed to year-round calendars have generally found that most expenses remain about the same. Transportation costs don't change for single-track schools and may be reduced for multi-track schools because fewer children need to be bused at the same time. The buses, however, will be running more days per year in multi-track schools, so there is increased wear. Depending on the climate, some schools have added air conditioning, and this may be an initial expense. Since teaching and the presentation of curricula will change in year-round schools, staff development needs must be considered, and there will be some one-time start up costs as schools make the transition.



Community Views of Year-round Education

Concerns expressed by parents in different communities are remarkably similar. In a survey undertaken in a small mid-western community with 6,200 students enrolled in eight elementary schools, one middle school and one high school to determine its views about year-round education, respondents agreed with advocates of year-round education that such a program could improve knowledge retention and reduce learning loss, improve student attitudes toward learning, and keep students out of trouble during the summer. (19) Problem areas identified were: Possible difficulty in arranging child care, disruptions in family vacations if siblings are on different school schedules, increased costs, not enough vacation time in the summer for students to mature and relax, difficulties when a student transfers to another school, impact on summer jobs of teachers, inadequate preparation time for teachers, too little outdoor activity time for children when summer vacations are reduced, disruption in family lifestyles and activities, break-up of neighborhood schools, and lack of research to

support educational advantages.

Advocates of year-round education have found that most of these concerns can be addressed. Families who have children in year-round schools have found that vacation opportunities are enhanced. Families can travel at off-season rates and more easily plan vacations around work schedules when one parent works in a seasonal job. Summer vacations need not be given up entirely. Many schools choose a calendar with one month to six weeks of vacation in the summer. Child care providers have adjusted their schedules to year-round schools and many have found it easier to operate on a year-round schedule when the flow of children is continuous over the year rather than intense during the summer.

Teachers have found that frequent breaks actually help their planning. Instruction may change so that teachers plan thematic units for each instructional period, and do their planning in between. While there may be some initial costs to begin year-round education, such as air conditioning, other costs have been found to remain the same as those on the nine-month calendar. Most communities have found that when year-round education is carefully planned with the community actively involved in the planning process, concerns can be positively addressed.



School Profiles

Schools in several different geographical areas have adopted year-round education. Oxnard, California, is an agricultural area in which many children of migrant families attend school. Migrant children often missed school during the winter months when their parents would leave the community to follow the harvests. The district began year-round education in 1976 because of expanding student enrollment and limited space. The district chose a 60/20 plan

and now has 7,125 of its 9,500 students attending school at one time while the others are on vacation. An integral part of the year-round education plan is the year-round vacation (YRV) program. The district worked closely with community agencies such as the city recreation department, Boys and Girls Clubs, and the YMCA and YWCA to provide year-round out-of-school activities for children. Community agencies now offer twelve-month programs, and have found that they are better able to serve Oxnard children because their programs are less crowded. The use of community facilities, just as the use of school facilities, has been maximized. (20)

Granite, a suburban school district near Salt Lake City, Utah, began year-round education several years ago after the state froze all funds for new school construction. The district uses the 45/15 plan so that students receive nine weeks of instruction followed by three weeks of vacation. The plan increases school capacity by 25%. It has also allowed the district to preserve neighborhood schools and avoid controversial boundary changes. Teachers report that student motivation and enthusiasm have improved, although test scores have not been raised. Principals also find the smaller enrollment more manageable, with less impact on common school facilities such as the library, lunchroom, or playground. The district has experimented with other alternative scheduling and staffing patterns. An eight-period modified block schedule is organized into four instructional blocks. Each class period is 86 minutes long. Students enroll in eight classes and attend each class on alternate days, and teachers teach three classes each day. Students report that they like the daily variety and the chance to take eight classes rather than seven. Teachers say that the longer class periods allow them to cover the subject matter in more depth. (21)

Redlands School District in Redlands, California, placed several elementary schools on a 60/20 calendar about six years ago in order to accommodate an influx of students during a time when California stopped providing school construction funds. The 60/20 plan was chosen because it provides relatively long instructional periods. The district uses a multi-track system and assigns four

teachers to three classrooms. Teachers work in grade-level teams in order to share classroom space. An elementary school principal has found that this arrangement encourages cooperative planning of curriculum and room environment. In a multi-track system all teachers are not on campus at the same time, which makes staff development activities difficult. Therefore, the district has planned one overlap day each time the tracks change so that all staff can get together. In addition, the district funds one professional development day each year for grade level planning. The change to a 60/20 calendar has had a positive impact on planning. Teachers are planning together more often and with better results because they often use the last week of their vacation time for this purpose.

The district assigned assistant principals to teach in the year-round schools because management issues are more complex. This arrangement also provides the principal with vacation time, since school is in session almost the entire year. The district is now expanding year-round education into the junior high program.

Some schools in the Redlands School District have hired part-time elementary teachers to teach during the reading and mathematics periods in order to ensure more personal attention to students for these critical subjects. All secondary teachers have student consultation periods. To maximize use of space, some teachers travel from classroom to classroom so that classrooms can be used for instruction during the consultation period. Teachers have the option of teaching for extra pay during their consultation period. Addressing overcrowding issues has meant that the district has had to develop some procedures and policies for dealing with problematic situations. School employees, parents, and students remain supportive of year-round education, however, because of the many other advantages. (22)



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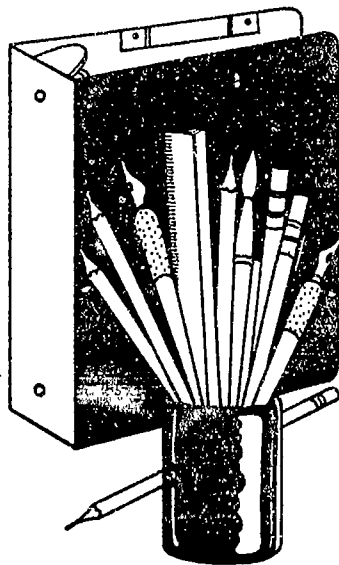
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ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

As a result of our year-long exploration and study of year-round education, the Task Force recognizes there are both real and perceived advantages and disadvantages to an alternative school calendar. Although the Task Force has concluded that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages, we offer the following brief lists for consideration. (*)

Anticipated Advantages for Children, Educators, & Parents

- * Utilizes space more efficiently; i.e., classrooms, playgrounds, cafeteria, media center, and multi-purpose areas.
- * Saves time in reviewing information already taught because students are not returning from long vacations.
- * Provides students with the opportunity to take specialized classes during intersessions/vacations.
- * Equally distributes periods of schooling and leisure time throughout the year.
- * Tends to improve children's behavior and attitudes towards school because the intersession/vacation periods are spread throughout the year.
- * Virtually all YRE schools report reductions in student discipline problems, absenteeism, truancy and vandalism.
- * May reduce the cost of travel because vacations can be scheduled during times when many other families travel. Large crowds can be avoided. In addition, vacations can be scheduled for times that are more convenient for working parents and their employers.
- * Allows for a wider variety of vacation experiences for families.

Possible Disadvantages for Children, Educators, & Parents

- * Some siblings may not always be on the same schedules, even if this is a preference of the parents.
- * Child care arrangements may require different types of scheduling.
- * A family's lifestyle may be altered.
- * Some of a student's friends may be on different schedules.
- * Some traditional summer scheduling of activities may need to be modified; i.e., swimming, tennis, outdoor education, scout camps, etc. Others, such as baseball, soccer, and football are usually not affected because practices and competitions tend to be scheduled for non-school times.
- * Requires different parent responsibility in planning for intersession breaks.

"You need to know why you're going with YRE."

- Norm Higgins, Principal
Piscataquis Community High School
Guilford, Maine

* Portions of the above lists were developed by the Provo School District, Provo, Utah.

DID YOU KNOW . . . ?

* Did you know that a September to June school calendar is not dictated by State or Federal regulations? Chapter 125.05 of the Regulations Governing Basic School Approval in the State of Maine mandates the following about the school year:

Each school shall be scheduled for at least 180 school days, at least 175 of which shall be instructional days for students in grades K-12, except that the school year for students in grade 12 shall be a minimum of 170 instructional days. Up to five days of the 180 school days may be used for teacher in-service days.

.....

"The eleventh commandment is not ...
Thou shall start school the day after
Labor Day and end on June 15."


- Gayle Utley
Supt. of Schools
Hyde Park, Vermont

.....



"Summer vacation has officially started. I dumped my memory bank on the way home."

* Did you know that nearly half the states in the U.S. have schools on year-round calendars?



Year-Round Schools in the U.S.

Year	States	Schools	Students
1981-82	15	349	278,000
82-83	14	360	281,000
83-84	15	355	304,000
84-85	16	394	330,000
85-86	16	410	354,000
86-87	14	408	362,000
88-89	16	499	430,000
89-90	20	632	525,000
90-91	22	872	736,000
91-92	23	1,668	1,350,000

* 87-88 data not available
Note: Includes public and private schools. Source: National Association for Year-Round Education.

“Restructuring schools can begin with something as an innovative summer school, just to demonstrate the benefits of uninterrupted instruction.”

-Charles Ballinger
Executive Director
National Assoc. for Year-Round Education

* Did you know that more and more school districts across the country are implementing year-round school calendars? In its January 19, 1994 issue, *Education Week* published the following information in an article about large school districts called, "Enrollment in Year-Round Schools Is Up Again."

Largest Year-Round School Districts

	Total Schools	Year-Round Enrollment			Total
		Elementary	Jr. High	High School	
Los Angeles	206	201,400	40,800	25,800	268,000
San Diego	47	34,000	6,235		40,235
Orange County, Fla.	42	30,000			30,000
Fresno, Calif.	25	26,307			26,307
Santa Ana, Calif.	26	24,675	900		25,575
Lodi, Calif.	34	14,505	3,990	6,787	25,282
Jordan, Utah	24	23,129			23,129
Duval County, Fla.	25	14,650	4,000		18,650
Clark County, Nev.	27	18,500			18,500
Socorro, Tex.	18	8,984	3,975	4,506	17,465
Granite, Utah	17	13,600	2,900		16,500
Seminole County, Fla.	17	11,457	4,904		16,361
Palmdale Elementary School District, Calif.	17	13,114	2,940		16,054
Vista, Calif.	17	10,945	4,418	235	15,598
Fontana, Calif.	20	14,810			14,810

SOURCE: National Association for Year-Round Education.

"Let us design a school calendar that allows teachers to *thrive*, not just survive."

-Gayle Utley
Supt. of Schools
Hyde Park, Vermont

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE

TOWARD A NEW FOCUS



Maine's Task Force on Year-Round Education endorses alternative school calendars which by design are thoughtfully and carefully tailored to the academic needs and interests of students. We believe that year-round education can become the foundation that undergirds a **NEW FOCUS** for education in Maine -- a focus that realistically represents teaching and learning within the context of today's needs and is a response to the way in which we prepare our students for what they should know and be able to do as they face tomorrow's challenges.










There is clear compatibility between year-round education and Maine's Common Core of Learning, which "Challenges traditional beliefs about students and schooling." While year-round education can serve as the catalyst for change, helping to move the current educational system from what it *is* to what it *could be*, the "Common Core of Learning" articulates a common vision for education in Maine and "calls on students, educators, parents, citizens, government officials, and all other Maine people to carry out the vision."



The Task Force acknowledges that a change in the school calendar will affect many citizens and enterprises in our state. It recognizes that the year-round education discussion is necessary and can prove profitable if we take into account, first and foremost, the educational needs of our children and youth. Year-round education in Maine should be addressed, considered and pursued

for the educational advantages, enhancements, and opportunities that it offers. The concept of year-round education should be

-  considered whenever persons concerned with the future of Maine's children and youth weigh educational options.
-  studied within the context of the advantages required to strengthen our educational system.
-  explored carefully, thoughtfully and fully over time.
-  analyzed within the context of the needs of any particular community or region.
-  regarded as a topic that, whenever evaluated by a community, requires the input of *all* segments of the population.
-  discussed in light of perceived obstacles that may inhibit a change from the current calendar.
-  adopted in whatever configuration a community eventually deems most beneficial and educationally sound after following the above suggestions.

The Task Force on Year-Round Education recommends to all Maine schools and communities that year-round education -- an alternative school calendar -- be pursued in earnest as a means to ensure that we utilize the school calendar to the fullest in order to provide a framework in which we can offer the best possible educational advantages for Maine's students.

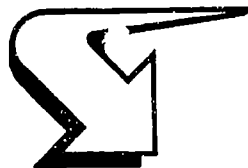
STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

THINKING ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION



Pursuing the idea of an alternative school calendar or thinking about its implementation is not unlike other restructuring processes that schools are currently undergoing. It is no easier and there are no shortcuts. If you are seriously considering an alternative school calendar you need to realize that whenever you mention "year-round schools," some people's minds will jump to an extreme scenario of 200-plus consecutive days of school, no summer vacation, and students sitting in classrooms with temperatures of 95 degrees F. Once you have dispelled these notions, it will be essential to assess the real effects that an alternative calendar will have on the local community.

While most business groups across Maine have not taken a position on this issue, some are concerned that this kind of schedule in schools will have a detrimental effect on their business. For this reason, you must be sure that you and your committee are well-grounded in a philosophy or rationale for moving to a different school calendar. Increased educational opportunity is difficult to oppose. Below are some suggestions that were offered to this task force, and which we urge you to consider.



Consideration Phase

A. If an alternative school calendar is to be successful, it will require that administrators, school boards, teachers and other school staff, students, parents, and community members be involved from the beginning. Getting early support from school personnel will help make the concept more attractive to others. Failure to do so will ensure that a confused message is conveyed to the community.

B. A school or district must be willing to complete a formal analysis of students' needs, budget requirements, and anticipated community benefits within a predetermined time frame.

C. All parties involved must agree that evaluations will take place during the process of implementation, and periodic evaluations will occur after the implementation process has been completed.

D. It appears as though a reasonable time line for implementation may be as short as six months in small districts, while larger schools and school unions may take longer.

Implementation Issues

A. Gayle Utley, Superintendent of Schools, Hyde Park, Vermont, who researched alternative school calendars and whose district plans to implement such a calendar by the 1995-1996 school year, offers the following findings:

1. Continuous learning without long summer breaks may have a positive impact on student achievement.

2. Intersessions provide unlimited opportunities for enrichment and remediation.

3. Student and teacher "burnout" decrease dramatically with an alternative school calendar.

4. Student attendance increases 10% with an alternative school calendar.

5. Teacher attendance increases 20% with an alternative school calendar.



B. Alternative calendars may result in conflicts with some traditional summer activities.

C. Arranging for child care during intersessions may initially be a concern for working parents.

D. A school or district should be prepared for opposition. Districts which have implemented alternative calendars report that community opposition is usually strong at the outset but reverses over a period of time.

E. Intersession programs may be more acceptable and successful if they are offered on an optional basis for teachers, students and parents.

F. Early in the process, construct a list of questions and concerns that might surface when the topic of alternative calendars is discussed. For example: "When will students graduate?" "How will this new calendar affect athletic and co-curricula programs?" "When will building maintenance take place?"

G. Communication may be facilitated when a vocabulary list of related terms is shared with interested parties.

H. Be prepared to consider that an alternative school calendar may have an impact on collective bargaining agreements, particularly if your school or district intends to take advantage of the opportunities offered by intersessions.

I. Budgets may see increases in relation to certain modifications of the school calendar.

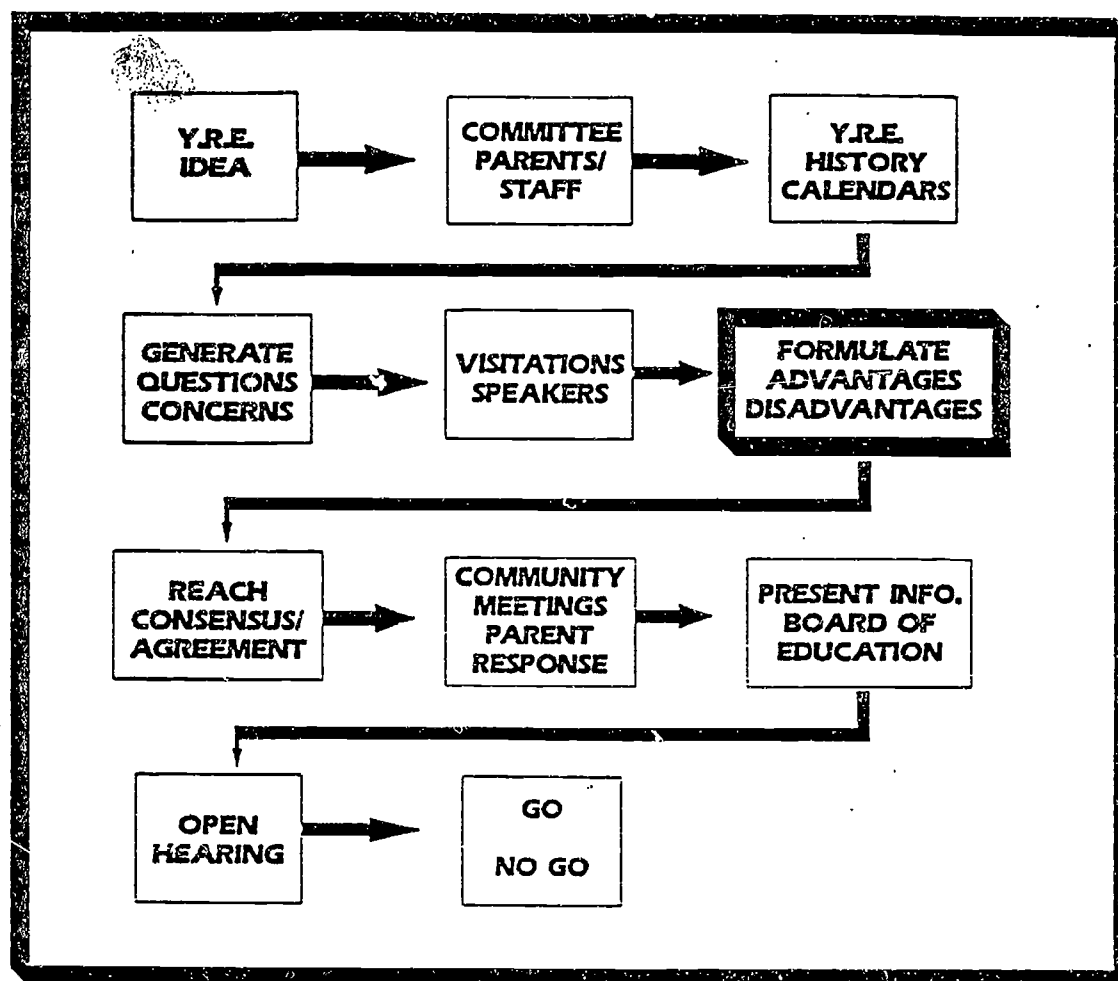
J. Making general announcements to large groups or audiences about alternative school calendars tends to increase the volatility of issues and concerns, so it is best to focus on small group discussions in the early stages of consideration.

Finally, keep in mind that not all schools are the same. What works for one community may not work or be appropriate for another. Consider your school unit's needs carefully and make sure that your calendar addresses the needs of your students. The most important consideration is the value of any change that can bring about an improvement in the students' education.

The following diagram may be used to help you plan your approach should your district decide to pursue the idea of a modified school calendar.



THE COMMUNITY AND YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION PLANNING STRATEGY



GIVENS

- VERY CONFUSING AND MISUNDERSTOOD CONCEPT
- 30% THINK IT'S TERRIFIC
- 40% PASSIVELY ACCEPT IT
- 30% NEGATIVE
- REPETITION OF INFORMATION IN THE MOST BASIC FORM IS ESSENTIAL
- PARENT/CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MUST BE ORGANIZED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
- PRINCIPAL, SUPERINTENDENT, AND BOARD OF EDUCATION MUST BE INFORMED AND INVOLVED
- PARENTS WANT THE BEST EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THEIR CHILDREN

"For more than a hundred years much complaint has been made of the unmethodical way in which schools are conducted, but it is only within the last 30 that any serious attempt has been made to find a remedy for this state of things. And with what results? Schools remain exactly as they were."

Ronald J. Perry, a former school superintendent, now teaches at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

EDUCATION WEEK • SEPTEMBER 23, 1992



"... and the reason we have summer vacation is so you can go home to help with the crops."

"The current school calendar simply makes no educational sense."

**-Charles Ballinger
Executive Director
National Assoc. for Year-Round Education**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



STUDENTS

1) Summer is traditionally a time for leisure and relaxation. Would school during the summer weeks eliminate this entirely?

While it is true that some students view summer vacation as an opportunity for activities away from academics, other children prefer to be in a school setting with their peers. Summer educational programming could be creative. School programs could take advantage of the good weather by offering field experiences and focused thematic units which are not possible during winter months.

2) How will Year-Round Education affect my summer job opportunities?

Students on an alternative calendar will still have a substantial block of summer time for working. In addition, two 3-week blocks during other times of the year are available for employment. In some cases, student employment dramatically increases. An alternative calendar would not affect after-school jobs.

3) How will summer programs that do not change along with alternative school calendars be affected?

Summer programs that do not take into account a change in the school calendar could be affected negatively. In communities where communication is effective and planning is cooperative, fine programs usually emerge. Agencies that winterize facilities or adapt creatively to year-round use would not be affected. Quality programming throughout the year would be a creative option for private and public agencies.

4) Will students be required to participate in intersession programs which would offer tutoring, outreach, and enrichment programs?

Intersession programs offered for one or more weeks could be optional for students, but some could be developed to help prevent student failure. It is certainly beneficial for a child to commit a week of vacation to prevent grade retention or dropping out; this is done now with our traditional calendar. Optional enrichment programs have been successfully offered during the summer for many years.

5) Will my friends in other school districts be on different calendars? Will we still have state-wide extra-curricular programs and activities?

If districts opt to create different alternative calendars, friends may be in school at different times. It is more likely that districts will eventually coordinate calendars after studying the impact of making adjustments and coordinating their efforts. Sporting events would need to be scheduled to both fit athletic objectives and satisfy the chosen calendars.

TEACHERS

1) Will there be hidden expectations for teachers during intercessions? More work for the same amount of money?

Teachers currently working during an intersession are employed on an optional extended contract, stipend, or per diem basis. Some of the work now done during the summer or when a teacher is released from the classroom could be done during intercession breaks. Work could be realistically dispersed throughout the year during intersession when more intensive and qualitative professional activities, such as curriculum planning, could be accomplished.

Teacher input into any plan for a reconfiguration of the calendar is essential. Consideration must also be given to teachers' negotiated contracts, and how and to what extent these may be affected by an alternative calendar. For instance, school boards must consult with affected teachers prior to the adoption of educational policy.

2) Will I be obligated to work during the intersession?

Teachers are offered more options and opportunities when an alternative calendar is adopted. Intersession will provide additional employment opportunities for those who may wish to teach intersession offerings such as enrichment programs, remedial programs, and tutorials.

3) A change in the school calendar could be a tumultuous change for teachers. How would it benefit our profession?

Many teachers don't just survive, they thrive with more rhythmic schedules such as those provided by alternative calendars. Teachers on a year-round calendar report that "burn-out" decreases. Furthermore, with opportunities for more regular employment, the teachers' public image is often enhanced. Professional courses, graduate work, and staff development opportunities can be focused during intercessions. On the other hand, some teachers may choose to take advantage of a new approach to vacationing.

4) I am a coach. How would a different school calendar affect my sports program?

Co-curricular schedules may have to be changed to adapt to an alternative school calendar. Intercessions provide time besides summer to focus on athletic conditioning, practices, and seasonal schedules. For example, schools that have been unable to initiate a swimming program due to the lack of a pool, may find summer attendance conducive to establishing such a program by utilizing outdoor community facilities.

5) What about my summer employment which helps meet my economic needs?

It is true that the nature of alternative employment will be substantially changed for some teachers. For those who rely on a supplemental summer income, this is a major concern. Other teachers who have been employed during summer months by schools that extend summer programs such as remedial classes, tutorials, and enrichment activities, would not experience the same effect.

6) To what extent do teachers who have experienced year-round education report a preference for teaching on such a calendar?

A study of year round school programs, conducted by the Utah State Board of Education, found that 84% of the teachers preferred to teach in a year-round school.

7) Many teachers depend on the summer for professional development. How would the graduate programs, workshops, institutes, or enrichment programs accommodate this change in the school calendar?

Those who provide professional development activities and graduate education programs are members of the education community who must be included in the discussion and planning of alternative calendars so that consent is assured, and potential problems are worked out, whenever a calendar is chosen. In states where year-round education is common, colleges and universities have adapted.

8) Would my students truly benefit from a different calendar?

Immediate intervention during intersession to reduce failure, reasonable teaching blocks during the school year, and shorter vacation periods all contribute to student success. Students are able to refresh and recharge three to four times a year instead of once. An alternative calendar may contribute to student success through creative use of intersessions, a focus on instructional blocks, and briefer vacation periods.

PARENTS

1) I went to school and got a good education. Why would a different school calendar be better for my children?

Experience with alternative calendars that support continuous learning has produced good results. Those who have experienced an alternative calendar report that by reducing the traditional extended summer vacation, learning loss is reduced for many students, and eliminated for others. Intersessions provide opportunities not only for enrichment, but for remediation that may prevent failure. The nature of education should be a direct response to student needs, which are very different today than in years past.

2) I depend on before and/or after school child care. How would this be affected?

Child care provides employment. Some caretakers would adapt, as would community agencies. More flexibility with family vacations gives caretakers more options too.

3) My child is involved in summer sports and town recreation programs, such as Little League and Pee Wee Soccer. How would these be affected?

Summer programs would continue; some time frames would change. Intersession could provide opportunities for fall and spring programs as well.

3) Would the quality of our family life be affected?

Current school structure does not fit the modern age. Few family jobs run from September to June, with a 2 1/2 to 3 month vacation. Creating a new calendar might better accommodate family togetherness and wellness by bringing children and parents together on the family work schedules. Some employers might find the options of vacations at different times of the year appealing because the products and services they provide would not be interrupted by the traditional summer vacation many parents now schedule in order to be with their children. In addition, the new calendar would provide more and different opportunities for family vacations.

4) I have more than one child. If the schools adopted multi-track scheduling, how would it accommodate my family's needs?

This concern should be addressed in the planning stages so that parents with more than one child will be given priority choice for their school year schedule whenever possible. Not all parents actually want their children on the same schedule; some choose to have them placed on different tracks.

5) I want my children to take full opportunity of the good weather in the summer for outdoor activities. Why would I want him/her in school during some of the best weather months in Maine?

School programs during the summer could take advantage of the good weather. Both academic and recreational opportunities increase, with a greater possibility of community involvement in programs that are offered only during the summer months. The school day hours might accommodate the summer sessions by starting and ending earlier.

ADMINISTRATORS/SCHOOL BOARDS

1) School construction, major projects, and maintenance have been accomplished during extended summer breaks. How would a different school calendar affect this period of work?

These projects, particularly construction, would be affected. However, intersession would allow on-going maintenance, which might help avoid costly crisis work.

2) What impact would a school district make on other communities if it were to create its own calendar?

The impact would be different for different communities. Thoroughly studying the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the potential impact should lead to thoughtful, responsible decisions.

3) Will "sports" scheduling rule how and who can make creative changes in the school calendar?

The alternative calendar might present problems. School districts or regions would need to agree to coordinate alternative calendars. Potential advantages for the sports program in an alternative calendar outweigh the disadvantages; around the country coaches are finding that intersessions provide time for intensity and quality of sports activities, including statewide tournaments, while not distracting from the academic program.

4) Where would we start? How could we encourage our staff and the public to consider the change?

Once the exploration of an alternative calendar is introduced to the community, repetition of information and ongoing conversations are essential. Groups of parents, staff, business representatives, and administrators must be organized. All must be kept well informed and involved.

5) As we study the options of multi-track or single track year-round education for our community, what are the outstanding benefits of each?

Multi-track education can make more efficient use of facilities, thereby relieving the pressure to build costly new facilities. It provides new opportunities for teacher training and professional substitutes. Both single and multi-track options can improve academic achievement, relieve student and teacher "burnout," and offer frequent remedial and enrichment programs during intersession.

6) Would state and local policy makers support Year-Round Education?

Policy makers may need to identify incentives to encourage school systems to fully explore alternative calendars. Perhaps the most successful local initiatives for examining alternative school calendars will be those that are primarily motivated by the potential for improved student learning.

COMMUNITY/BUSINESS

1) How will this affect the student work force in the community during the summer?

Experience with year-round calendars reveals that businesses adapt. Although available for shorter time periods, students will still be able to work in summer jobs; in addition, students will be available during intercessions to provide more options for regular employees' vacations. Some communities are pursuing retired senior citizens as service workers and seasonal workers.

2) This concept originated in areas of the country that had tremendous problems with school over-crowding. If we don't have that problem, why would we adopt their solution?

Since its origination, many communities have adopted year-round education for educational reasons. Changing the calendar has student and staff benefits. Research indicates a more continuous education, with a modified summer vacation, is instructionally sound. While a more complicated multi-track program is often chosen to ease school population problems, communities looking mainly for efficient and cost-effective schooling might choose a single track approach.

3) The implementation of a Year-Round Calendar in Maine would be difficult. How would it start? Would schools &/or whole communities work independently or would it be mandated for the entire state?

There is no current plan to mandate an alternative calendar. Rethinking the school calendar is a local endeavor. At the present time the state only mandates the length of the school year. The development of the calendar configuration is ultimately a local school board decision. Local initiatives for change should be motivated by the goal to serve children better.

4) Why change the school calendar so drastically? Wouldn't a longer school year or a longer school day be better?

Adopting a new calendar would present better opportunities for the delivery of services. Lengthening the school year or day would be, in itself, limiting. Furthermore, it would require that consideration be given to teacher negotiated contracts. Decreasing the length of the summer vacation, on the other hand, prevents loss of knowledge, and introducing intercessions provides opportunities for promoting student success. Making the day or year longer doesn't guarantee the benefits that an alternative calendar offers.

5) How would we deal with the heat of summer in the schools? Schools are not equipped with air-conditioning.

Comfort involves climate control for better air quality. Air-conditioning is not the only answer; however, new construction does provide air-conditioning ducts for installment. Schools are already the site for many summer programs. Only extreme weather would be problematic; perhaps a heat wave would be considered equal to a blizzard, thus allowing for cancellations when schools are not air-conditioned.

6) Will changing to a Year-Round calendar cost the taxpayers more money?

A single track schedule would involve little additional cost. Some of this cost would be offset by savings. Most additional costs would be related to intersession programs; however, even these costs may be met by reallocating funds already available.

7) Will the state support and facilitate local change?

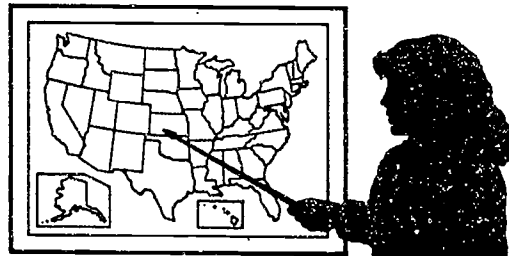
The State Department of Education provides expertise, guidance and technical support. Incentives will need to be identified and made available to pioneering districts.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

Year-round education, as discussed in this report, is most frequently a redistribution of the usual number of days students attend school each year; it is an approximately 180-day alternative school calendar designed to meet the particular needs of any given community. Students on an alternative school calendar receive periodic vacations, called "intersessions," in addition to all the traditional holidays.

Year-round education is not a new idea. A review of the history of schooling in Maine and the United States reveals that current regional and national uniformity of school calendars resulted largely from transportation advances and educational, political, and economic trends that occurred during the first quarter of this century. Until that general time period, the design of school calendars was usually based on the very specific needs of individual communities, and students attended school on a wide array of schedules throughout the year.



While the Task Force's endorsement of year-round education might appear to be a call to return to the past, it is, rather, a challenge to step into the present while maintaining a keen vision of the future. The challenge is to recognize that we have entered a new era of social, technological, educational, and economic demands that require flexible and creative approaches to the issues and problems at hand. The development of alternative school calendars is one way communities can begin to integrate strategies and solutions to achieve their desired goals. As long as they follow State regulations regarding the overall length of the school year, communities are free to design their school calendars in the configurations most beneficial to their students and most suitable to their needs. We encourage each community or school district to do so. The type of alternative school calendar chosen by a community or school district

depends on the purpose(s) for the change. There may be many reasons for choosing or designing an alternative calendar; one common reason is to alleviate school overcrowding, while another is to gain the educational advantages it can afford students. Regardless of the reasons for making a change, it is clear that school calendars with evenly distributed, alternating patterns of academic and vacation periods can provide a welcome balance in students' lives.

Many types of alternative school calendars have been developed. Students on a 45/15 calendar attend school for forty-five days, then have fifteen days of intersession/vacation. Other common calendars have 60/20 or 60/15 configurations. Still others have unique designs to meet the needs of their communities. In addition, "track" systems are utilized. Schools without serious space concerns may have single track systems, with their entire populations attending at the same time. Schools on multi-track systems gain increased capacity by having different groups attend school on alternating calendars or different "schedules." Intersessions/vacations may be used for a variety of academic and extra-curricular purposes on both track systems.

The research reviewed by the Task Force has been useful in the development of this report. We have learned that communities do not necessarily choose alternative school calendars for the purpose of increasing student achievement scores, although there is evidence to suggest that this is often a

result. Aside from economic and measurable academic reasons, many communities decide to use alternative school calendars for other educational advantages. There have been many reports of improvements such as increased student and teacher attendance, less time spent on academic review, increased retention of information, decreased dropout rates, and opportunities during intersessions for enrichment and remedial programs.



Educationally disadvantaged students may benefit the most from such changes.

The members of the Task Force on Year-Round Education acknowledge that although there are significant benefits to be gained by implementing alternative school calendars, the process itself may be difficult and unsettling for many people involved. We are, after all, endorsing a break with a cherished tradition that over the course of several generations has been woven into the fabric of our personal, social, and professional lives. When tradition becomes synonymous with "truth" or "right," it is natural for resistance to occur in response to suggestions for change. For this reason, we want to emphasize that communities should enter the exploration of alternative school calendars with careful consideration of all issues, and with respect for all concerns.

For those persons interested in reaching the stage of successful implementation of an alternative school calendar, it is necessary to remember that the most important element of the process will be community involvement and support. The discussion and planning stages must include broad representation from individuals and community groups, but the meetings can -- and sometimes should -- be small and informal. Having a clear rationale that is discussed openly and thoughtfully will help lead to realistic goals. The commitment to work through potential problems and real or perceived obstacles will result from the strength of a community's shared vision.

The members of this Task Force found the project of studying year-round education to be a compelling and worthwhile endeavor. We look forward to the discussions and further efforts that will ensue as a result of the suggestions and endorsement in this report.



Nothing is permanent but change.

- Heraclitus

GLOSSARY

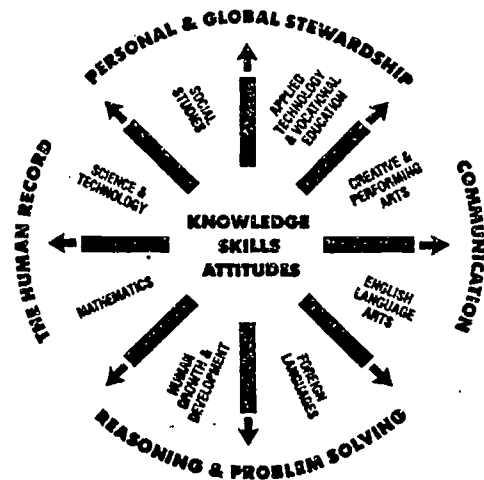
DEFINITION OF TERMS

Alternative Calendar

Used in year-round education to redistribute instructional and intersession/vacation periods into alternating patterns. The total amount of yearly school attendance and vacation time remain the same as on traditional calendars.

Common Core of Learning

A report that identifies what all Maine students should know and be able to do upon graduation from high school. This common core of learning focuses upon the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which citizens will need for the 21st century. Developed by a commission that engaged experts on pertinent topics and representatives of professional groups and institutions, it addresses curricula, instructional strategies, and professional development.



Holidays

The traditional holidays that are currently observed when school is not in session, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, July 4, Labor Day, etc. Holidays and intersessions are not the same.

Intersession

Replaces the term "vacation." Over the course of a full year, intersessions equal the same amount of time as traditional summer vacations, but are spread out into three or four shorter blocks that separate instructional/academic periods.

Tracks

Single Track

An alternative school calendar which provides for the entire school population to follow the same academic and intersession schedule.

Multi-Track

An alternative school calendar which increases a school's capacity by grouping students and teachers on staggered schedules. While one group is on vacation/intersession, the others are attending school.

Year-Round Education (YRE)

An alternative calendar or schedule for learning which evenly distributes instructional blocks and vacation/intersession periods over a full 12-month year.

RESOURCES

RESOURCES

1. ASSOCIATIONS

National Association for Year-Round Education
Charles V. Ballinger, Executive Director
P.O. Box 11386
San Diego, CA 92111
(619) 276-5296

Florida Association for Year-Round Education
Florida School Boards Association
203 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(904) 224-1374

2. SELECTED STATE AND DISTRICT RESOURCES

Cache County School District
Stephen W. Zsiray, Jr., Assistant Superintendent
North Logan, UT 84321

California State Department of Education
Tom Payne, Year-Round Education Consultant
Alternative Education Unit
721 Capital Mall
Sacramento, CA 94244-2220
(904)322-6249

Cherry Creek School District
Educational Services Center
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Englewood, CO 80111
(303) 773-1184

Clark County School District
James Pughsley, Associate
Superintendent, Special Services
2832 East Flamingo Road
Las Vegas, NV 89121
(702) 799-5049



Duval County Public Schools
6628 Evergreen Avenue
Jacksonville, FL 32208
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Lamoille North Supervisory Unit
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Utah State Department of Education
Larry Horyna, Coordinator
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(801) 538-7824

3. BOOKS, JOURNALS, AND REPORTS

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