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AUTHOR Bradford, James C., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case for the implementation of year-round education, arguing that education needs to effectively and efficiently utilize school facilities. The paper focuses on the cost of implementing and operating year-round schools--the impact on support services, transportation, facilities, and maintenance. Data are based on a review of several studies across the nation that examined the costs of year-round schooling. Findings indicate that when moving to a multitrack year-round program, the break-even point in cost occurs when a school's enrollment exceeds 16 percent of its stated facility capacity. Students in a school that exceeds 120 percent of its capacity will probably generate both operational and capital savings. A study of six school districts (Coleman and Freebern, 1993) found that when building capacity was up to 110 percent, mobile units were less expensive than the initiation of a multi-track program. Single-track programs appear to offer cost effective opportunities for student promotion, remediation, enrichment, and acceleration. It is argued that year-round education schedules provide a viable option to school construction that accommodates increasing student enrollments in times of limited financial resources; offers opportunities for increased educational programming; in some cases, reduces student repetition of grades; and reduces facility costs. Contains 12 references. (LMI)

# *Year-Round Education: Impact on Support Services, Transportation, Operation, Facilities, and Maintenance*

*The Association of School Business Officials of Maryland and Washington, D.C.*

*Anne Arundel Community College*
*Maryland*

*January 20, 1995*



*"The real issue is not just adding or manipulating time, but changing the fundamental way we do business."*

*NEA - National Center for Innovation*

*Leadership and vision will be necessary if the educators of the 21st Century are to assure that each child in America has a viable future. The question is "are we truly serious about providing a world class education for each student?" The research has cited that the least successful schools have engaged in "shallow coping" (Lewis and Miles, 1990). The enemy of change is us; stated more succinctly by Oliver Hazard Perry in his message from the War of 1812: "We have met the enemy and they are [h]ours" (Prisoners of Time, 1994). The primary dilemma in organizational and system change is how to manage facility usage as related to the available hours in each available school day. School facilities are one of the most under utilized components in the educational organization. The opportunities for educators in the educational organization are endless when finding ways to rediscover the hours available for reprogramming America's school facilities. It has been stated that an overwhelming number of America's school facilities are only in use for a small percentage of the available time. The Nation's children are in need of an instructional schedule that provides more time for learning than the traditional 180*

*day agrarian calendar. Each local school administrator has a responsibility to effectively and efficiently manage the time utilization of a very costly educational resource - school facilities.*

*As the public demands increase to make our educational programs more efficient and effective in an international and global society, the utilization of school facilities will become increasingly a subject for public debate. As increased organizational studies support maximum utilization of school facilities the term year-round education will seek new meaning. The task that befalls each educator is how to effectively and efficiently manage and utilize the available school facilities in an era when the time schedule of students has become one of national scrutiny. Individuals are mortal; however, individuals with great vision can solve the educational and facilities problems for student entry into the 21st Century.*

## *Facility Costs in Year-Round Schools*

*During the past two decades, a number of studies have been conducted to determine if year-round schools are more costly to operate than the schools on the traditional agrarian calendar. Most of the earlier studies were based on hypothetical models, rather than the actual costs of placing a school on a year-round schedule. Many of the year-round schools have documented the operational costs. Due to many variables in calculating facility costs, it is extremely difficult to draw a finite conclusion concerning specific dollar amounts when comparing the traditional versus the year-round operation. According to a study conducted by school administrators in California (1988), a major variable in cost calculation occurs when several options are available. These include: year-round programs mandated in a school district for all the schools, voluntary for all schools within a district, mandatory with certain schools within a district, voluntary with certain schools within a school district or voluntary within a district when parents make the choice between traditional and year-round schedules. Each*

*option has a different effect on school facility costs. Additional complications in a study by Fardig (1992) stated that costs are determined and swayed by local policy decisions of the board of education and administration. Summer school, intersessions, and overtime for maintenance and custodial staff in multi-track schools (Stiff, 1986) are often given little attention when additional programs offered in some districts are not in other school districts.*

*The California school administrators (1988) determined that single-track schools have little to no significant impact on costs. District policy was the main cause when single-track school costs exceeded the traditional or agrarian calendar. School research from the Department of Business Services for Orange County Public Schools in Orlando, Florida (1994) revealed that school size was more influential on costs than the single-track calendar. When single-track schools of equivalent size were compared to single-track of similar size, the costs per student were not significant.*

*In multi-track year-round programs the issue of cost avoidance was the single most important concern in most of the studies. School divisions with limited funds and increasing enrollments have had to increasingly address the issue of capital costs as related to facility utilization. The Florida study (1990) cited the most commonly mentioned reason for establishing year-round multi-track calendars was in response to the public outcries for more efficient and effective utilization of the present facilities before launching costly new capital programs for constructing school facilities. The Parrish study (1989) reported that increasing a school's capacity to serve more students has become a political issue that requires informed actions. In a study by Fish and Taylor (1989), the report stated that the most commonly cited reasons for considering multi-track year-round education was the lack of financial resources and increased or uncontrolled growth in student enrollments. The Florida Department of Education (1990) reported that the most significant cost savings would be in the avoidance of new school construction costs. The study noted that gross operating costs would probably increase in*

*schools converting to multi-track year-round programs; however the report further stated the cost per pupil would probably decline in multi-track year-round schools. A study by Pettier (1991) stated that the operating cost on a per pupil basis in one of the most researched school districts in America (Oxnard, California) decreased by $130.00 per pupil in a multi-track schedule when compared to the traditional schedule in the same school district. Obviously, operating costs will increase when a multi-track school operates for 240-245 days rather than the traditional 180 days, but per pupil costs decrease, allowing a net savings to the taxpayer.*

*The study by the Department of Business in the Orange County Public Schools (1994) stated that there was no evidence to support that operating costs per pupil were higher in multi-track year-round schools than in those operating on a traditional calendar; however, there was significant evidence that indicated multi-track schedules may result in reduced per student costs. Further, by placing traditional calendar elementary schools on a multi-track calendar and increasing the capacity by twenty-five percent enabled the school district to avoid twenty percent additional construction costs or a construction cost savings of $2,432.00 per student.*

*The National Association for Year-Round Education in a study by Coleman and Freebern (1993) concluded that the decision to convert from a traditional schedule to a multi-track year-round schedule should be at the time a school's population exceeds 116 percent of its capacity. It is at the 116 percent capacity that it would be advantageous to move from mobile units to a multi-track schedule.*

## *Classified Employees Costs in Year-Round Schools*

*In a survey of one hundred thirty-eight classified employees by Rothberg, Ausherman and Preston (1994) of Orange County, Florida (custodians, food services, office staff and others - 50 on single-track and 88 on multi-track), the response was that 88 percent of the single-track*

*staff was very satisfied, satisfied, neutral; while only 50 percent of the multi-track personnel responded that they were very satisfied, satisfied, or neutral with their respective schedule. The Marion County Florida study (1988) noted that the operational cost was $22.00 less per pupil for stuaents on the multi-track calendar when compared to students on the traditional calendar. Cost for custodial services on a pupil basis is essentially the same for year-round programs when compared to traditional schedules (Brekke, 1993). Normally, multi-track year-round operational costs are proportionate to the additional days of operation.*

## *School Nutrition Costs in Year-Round Schools*

*In the conversion from a traditional to a year-round calendar several advantages can be anticipated: better utilization of facilities and equipment; smaller numbers of children when compared to a school operating at over-capacity, increased student meal participation, shorter serving lines, less crowding, and fewer discipline problems. According to a Marion County, Florida study (1988) it was noted that food costs were $4.00 per day less per student in the multi-track calendar when compared to students on the traditional calendar. The cost associated with school nutrition on a per meal basis should not vary significantly on the multi-track/single track versus the traditional schedule. Staffing in school nutrition is based on the number of meals served. School nutrition workers prefer a twelve month schedule. Federal funding is available on the same basis when the schools operate on extended schedules.*

## *Transportation Costs in Year-Round Schools*

*One of the considerations of converting to a year-round calendar is the possibility of increasing transportation costs. School bus drivers prefer a twelve month schedule. In ideal*

*situations the number of buses used can be reduced in proportion to the number of pupils served; however, if buses were to travel over similar routes without a reduction in miles or numbers of buses, the costs of such transportation will be increased. Oxnard, California (1986) noted a savings of 9.83% in transportation costs directly attributed to the multi-track year-round schedule with the elimination of four additional buses due to more efficient utilization of the present fleet. On a per pupil basis the costs of transportation will remain constant for pupils on traditional schedules when compared to students on a multi-track schedule (Brekke, 1987). The Marion County, Florida study (1988) noted that the transportation costs were the same for a multi-track calendar when compared to a traditional calendar. Visalia Unified School District in California reported that transportation costs remained constant on a per student basis when traditional schedules were compared to year-round schedules.*

## *Case Study of Costs Incurred in Discontinuing a Year-Round Multi-Track School System*

*After 14 years of operation in a division wide multi-track year-round school program with 78,000 students (1989) in the Jefferson County Schools, Colorado, the district had a real cost savings of $87.7 million dollars in bonded indebtness, without giving consideration to savings in the operational and support areas (White 1990). In August 1988, the Jefferson County School Board discontinued the school district's multi-track year-round program for political reasons. What was the cost to the taxpayer for the discontinuation? This is a question that is usually omitted from the heated discussions in public debate about the costs of implementing year-round schooling. The public debates are usually about start-up costs not the long term savings or expense of program termination as was the case in Jefferson, Colorado. Unknown to the school board at the time of the multi-track termination were the start up costs of $87.7 million dollars in increased bonded debt for eight new schools, plus the added operating costs of $6.6 million*

*required for opening six new elementary schools and two new high schools because of multi-track schedule discontinuation and increased instructional costs of $1.9 million dollars. The "reality check" for the school board's decision to discontinue the year-round multi-track schedule totaled $116 million dollars in additional costs to the district to house the same number of students.*

*In 1974, when Jefferson County introduced multi-track year-round education, the objective was to save on building costs and increase the capacity of each school facility in a rapidly growing school district with limited resources. Admittedly, the school board did not have the exact figures on how much money was actually being saved in the operation of the year-round multi-track program in Jefferson County Schools. Little consideration was given to the additional funding required for the increased operational costs, textbook costs, capital costs, interest costs, and other costs necessitated in bringing six new elementary schools and two new high schools into the district budget.*

*Other considerations omitted were the unexpected negative public reaction to the school board decision to discontinue the multi-track schedule. The school board decision promulgated a vote of no confidence by teachers because of the increased operational and capital costs that deferred or stalled teacher raises (1988). The superintendent found himself in an impossible situation and retired (1988). Two board members did not seek reelection and one was defeated at the polls. The new board had to increase property taxes. The taxpayers rejected the tax increase for the increased operating expenses and increased capital improvement program (1989). The taxpayers revolt was evident at the ballot box. A survey of the residents revealed that eight percent of the residents wished to end year-round schools.*

## *Conclusion*

*The nation's schools are facing many problems; one of which is the decaying, overcrowded, poorly maintained, and obsolete school facilities. Over 50 percent of the school facilities in use today were built in the 1950's and 1960's. According to a national report "Wolves at the Schoolhouse Door: An Investigation of the Condition of Public School Buildings", many were built hastily and as cheaply as possible. The condition of America's school facilities represents one of the many financial problems that will become an integral component in the restructuring of education for the 21st century child. America's children, like its school facilities, have been basically ignored in many states and school districts by the legislatures, the electorate, the school officials, and the school board due mainly to limited financial resources. The literature reveals that the break even point in cost for a school board moving to a multi-track year-round program is when a school's enrollment exceeds sixteen percent of its stated (facility) capacity. Students housed in a facility exceeding 120 percent of capacity probably will generate both an operational and capital savings. A study of six school districts by Coleman and Freebern (1993) stated that when building capacity was under and up to 110 percent that mobile units were less expensive than initiating multi-track. When the enrollment capacity was 116 percent and higher, a multi-track year-round program was fiscally prudent.*

*Year-round education is a concept that has been in existence for approximately 100 years. A number of single-track and multi-track school districts have been successfully utilizing year-round school calendars for over twenty-five years. Year-round multi-track education schedules provide a viable option to school construction that accommodates periods of rapidly increasing students enrollments when financial resources are limited. The single-track programs offer a cost*

*effective means of increasing educational programming for promotion, remediation, enrichment, and acceleration. Some year-round programs are reducing the number of repeaters which is cost effective. Other programs for enrichment will require additional funding. One cannot argue that vacant hotel rooms, vacant hospital rooms, and vacant classrooms from June to September is an efficient and effective use of facilities. Well designed year-round schedules can reduce facility costs and produce educational programs of quality.*

*Author:*

*Dr. James C. Bradford, Jr., Past President*
*National Association for Year-Round Education*
*Superintendent*
*Buena Vista City Public Schools*
*P. O. Box 110*
*Buena Vista, Virginia 24416*
*(703) 261-2129*

*Recipient of:*

*American Association of Schools Administrator's Outstanding Research Award in the Professorial/Practitioner Research Category (1989)*

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