



SAVE IOWA SUMMERS

School is cool, but not in August.

For more information or to sign a petition, go to www.saveiowasummers.com.

Arguments For and Against a Synchronized, Post Labor Day School Start Date

LOCAL CONTROL

Proponents say:

- Current Iowa law does not provide total control to school district when setting school calendars. Surveys nation wide show the vast majority of parents support post-Labor Day school start dates.
- Having a uniform, post-Labor Day school start date will provide an equal number of instructional days to all students before taking the state standardized test.
- Having all students starting school on the same day will eliminate confusion for parents moving from district to district and ensure all children start school on the first day of classes.

Opponents say:

- Local elected officials are better able to set school calendars that work for their district.
 - School Board members are elected by the people and should have the power to set the school calendar.
 - Each school district has vastly different needs and that one school-start date does not fit all.
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FALL SEMESTER EXAMS

Proponents say:

- We have been unable to find research to support the assumption that students perform better academically if the first semester is complete prior to the winter break. To the contrary, evidence that supports the calendar configuration does not impact academic performance.
- But, the top 10 academic states, in four commonly used state education ranking systems, have two things in common. The majority began the school year in late August or early-September and administer semester finals after the winter break.
- Students in Arlington Public Schools in Virginia, a state that has been starting school after Labor Day for many years, had the highest cumulative SAT scores in the nation in 2006, with an average composite score of 1620.
- Long-term learning is enhanced when students have an opportunity to review and study material that they have been presented over a semester in a thoughtful and timely manner. This is called the "spacing effect" and is well documented in psychology literature.

Opponents say:

- A later school start date will preclude the first semester from being completed prior to the Winter Break and students do better if they are able to take exams before the long break.
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TEACHER'S CONTINUING EDUCATION

Proponents say:

- Evidence shows that most colleges and universities pull from many school districts. Institutions of higher learning cannot be expected to set summer class schedules around several different start and end dates.
- It is difficult to create advanced learning opportunities for teachers when public school calendars vary.
- Many of our dedicated teachers are currently not certified in the area in which they teach. Federal education law requires certification in areas of teaching for all by the year 2012 — a longer summer would allow teachers more time to earn this needed certification.
- Teachers often receive increased pay as advanced degrees are received and we should maximize the time our teachers have to achieve advanced learning.
- Research shows that students taught by teachers who hold national certification score better on standardized tests.

Opponents say:

- Institutions of higher learning should modify their schedules to accommodate teachers' needs.
 - It is not the school systems responsibility to set a school calendar that works with the summer sessions offered by colleges and universities.
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STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Proponents say:

- The majority of students today don't work for the "fun" of it. Many work to help with household expenses or to save for higher learning.
- The Employment Policies Institute found that students who worked during high school had higher paying jobs upon graduation.
- Teachers also report students with part-time jobs are more focused and more appreciative of their education than others.

Opponents say:

- Student work is a matter of personal choice and the school calendar should not be structured around it.
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AGRARIAN CALENDAR

Proponents say:

- We couldn't agree more. The agrarian calendar, a calendar with mini-breaks and a shorter summer, was ushered out with urbanization – and is continued to be pushed by those supporting the year-round calendar concept, as is documented in Dr. Kenneth Gold's book *School's In: the History of Summer Education in American Public Schools*.

Opponents say:

- The "traditional calendar" is a calendar of yesteryear and we should not be continuing to use an agrarian calendar in this modern age.
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EARLY AUGUST SCHOOL START DATES NECESSARY TO END SCHOOL YEAR IN MAY

Proponents say:

- Surveys in other states have shown parents support the school year ending by late-May or early June.
- Arkansas law requires 180 student instructional days a year.
- There are 194 weekdays between the day after Labor Day and May 30.

Opponents say:

- Parents want the school year to end prior to Memorial Day. This necessitates an early-August school start date.
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EARLY AUGUST SCHOOL START DATES ALLOW MORE FREQUENT & MUCH NEEDED SCHOOL YEAR BREAKS

Proponents say:

- Calendars with many breaks interrupt the flow of learning.
- Finding quality childcare for children during these breaks can be difficult
- There is no evidence year-round school calendars, as calendars with frequent breaks are called, are better for student achievement, as proponents of year round school calendars claim. Actually, a recent study by world renowned education researcher, Dr. Gene V. Glass, found: ". "These arguments often rely on data drawn from laboratory experiments where subjects memorize nonsense syllables or perform other non-meaningful tasks. The relevance of these studies to actual classroom practice is questionable."
- News articles report school districts around the country have dropped year round school calendars for two basic reasons – increased non-instructional cost and no increase in academic performance.

Opponents say:

- Teachers and students enjoy mini-breaks during the school year. Frequent small breaks keep them refreshed and prevent student and teacher burnout.
- More breaks during the school year and a shorter summer break are better for student achievement.

TRAVEL & TOURISM

Proponents say:

- We have been unable to find research that shows starting school early benefits long term learning.
- We have found research supporting the need for increased dollars earmarked for education and research touting the benefits of youth work experiences.
- The mid-August school start date is currently cutting up to three weeks from the summer tourism season – meaning Iowa taxpayers are shouldering a heavier tax burden to provide the same tax dollars to our classrooms.
- School administrators and teachers are continually reminding elected officials of the need for more educational dollars. Taxpayers do not want to foot a larger bill. By pushing back the start of the school year we would be eliminating one of the most expensive cooling months of the school year and increasing tax revenue to the state, without placing higher taxes of individuals.
- A synchronized post-Labor Day school start date would not only reduce non-instructional costs, but increase tax revenue available for legislators to increase public education funding.
- Non-tourism related business have difficulty scheduling summer vacations for employees with children during the short summer.

Opponents say:

- School calendars should not be set around the needs of industry.
- The early school start date often provides families the opportunity to travel and less expensive and crowded times.