

**Title: Research on year-round education or school calendar modification in elementary schools**

**Date: April 2014**

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**Question: >> What does recent research say about year-round education and school calendar modification in elementarys?**

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**Response:**

There is a vast body of research on Extended/Expanded Learning Time (ELT) that may be relevant to your request. We would like to recommend to you two memos recently developed by another Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Northeast and Islands), to help provide up-to-date knowledge on this topic.

[http://www.relnei.org/wp-content/referencedocs/RELNEI\\_RD0132\\_School\\_Schedules.pdf](http://www.relnei.org/wp-content/referencedocs/RELNEI_RD0132_School_Schedules.pdf)

[http://www.relnei.org/wp-content/referencedocs/RELNEI\\_RD0183\\_School\\_Calendar.pdf](http://www.relnei.org/wp-content/referencedocs/RELNEI_RD0183_School_Calendar.pdf)

In this memo, we focused on studies that look at students' experience in year-round school or extended-school-year models. We searched selected databases and websites for relevant resources from the past five years (see "Methods" section below), and organized the memo as follows:

- Literature on year-round education and school calendar modification in elementary schools
- Relevant organizations/websites

Citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the article. Citations include a link to a free online version, when available. We have not evaluated the rigor of these resources, and provide this memo for your information only.

**REFERENCES**

**Literature on year-round education and school calendar modification in elementary schools**

Deschenes, S., & Janc, M. H. (2011). *Year-round learning: Linking school, afterschool, and summer learning to support student success* (Research Brief). Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved on April 22, 2014, from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/year-round-learning-linking-school-afterschool-and-summer-learning-to-support-student-success>

*Abstract:* Year-round learning consists of intentional, community-based efforts to connect school, afterschool, and summer learning to support positive youth outcomes, develop continuous learning pathways, and provide equitable opportunities for both students and families. This brief examines the efforts of initiatives that are approaching learning time in new ways and bringing community resources together to provide year-round learning environments. The brief discusses:

- Different configurations of year-round learning
- Common principles used by programs and initiatives doing this work
- Early lessons from these initiatives
- Profiles of six programs and initiatives illustrating themes discussed in this brief

Dixon, A. (2011). *“Focus” on the alternative school calendar: Year-round school programs and update on the four-day school week. Challenge to lead*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board. Retrieved on April 21, 2014, from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED517178>

*Abstract:* In recent years, lean economic conditions have led to state and local agency budget cuts, including reductions to elementary and secondary education. To compensate for less state funding and decreasing local revenues, many state legislatures have passed policy and funding bills that give school systems more latitude in making finance and program decisions. A key area where more flexibility is apparent is the scheduling of school calendars. One of the first responses to the downturn in the economy was to explore the four-day school week as a money-saving measure. Statutes in nearly half of the 16 SREB (Southern Regional Education Board) states now permit local school districts to adopt calendars where students attend school for longer but fewer days. With renewed focus at the state and federal level on reforming education and increasing student learning, state policymakers also are looking for more creative ways to arrange the instructional school year. The concept of altering the traditional school calendar is not new, but few schools and districts across the country have embraced the idea. Those that have chosen alternative calendars typically have similar reasons, including raising student achievement, reducing the achievement gap among groups of students, saving money, and decreasing school overcrowding. In the SREB region, most schools and districts that operate on an alternative calendar use either a year-round school program or a four-day school week, although year-round schedules are more prevalent. Year-round school calendars reorganize minimum instructional time requirements across the school year; reduce the time students spend on summer vacation; and provide multiple opportunities for tutoring, remediation and enrichment throughout the school year. This “Focus” report provides an overview of year-round programs and examines the advantages and challenges that are inherent to most, if not all, of these programs. It also provides an update on actions relating to the four-day school week. Although only a small percentage of schools in the SREB region have year-round programs in operation, it is important for education leaders and legislators to explore whether this type of calendar contributes to stronger academic achievement results for students.

Graves, J., McMullen, S., & Rouse, K. (2013). Multi-track year-round schooling as cost saving reform: Not just a matter of time. *Education Finance and Policy*, 8(3), 300–315.

*Abstract:* In the face of school crowding and fears about inequality-inducing summer learning loss, many schools have started to adopt multi-track year-round school calendars, which keep the same number of school days, but spread them more evenly across the calendar year. This change allows schools to support a larger student population by rotating which students are on break at any point in time. While year-round schooling can save money, the impact on academic achievement is uncertain and only recently have large-scale studies become available for policymakers. This brief examines research on the effects of multi-track year-round schooling, focusing on two rigorously executed case studies. This research gives little support for claims that year-round schooling will boost student achievement. Except as a remedy for highly over-crowded schools, year-round schooling seems to have little impact on achievement, and has even been shown to decrease achievement, especially among the most high-risk student populations.

McMullen, S. C., & Rouse, K. E. (2012). The impact of year-round schooling on academic achievement: Evidence from mandatory school calendar conversions. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 4(4), 230–252. Retrieved on April 21, 2014, from

<http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/business/economics/faculty/rouse/2011-02-14%20The%20Impact%20of%20year%20round%20schooling.pdf>

*Abstract:* In 2007, 22 Wake County, North Carolina traditional calendar schools were switched to year-round calendars, spreading the 180 instructional days evenly across the year. This paper presents a human capital model to illustrate the conditions under which these calendars might affect achievement. We then exploit the natural experiment to evaluate the impact of year-round schooling on student achievement using a multi-level fixed effects model. Results suggest that year-round schooling has essentially no impact on academic achievement of the average student. Moreover, when the data are broken out by race, we find no evidence that any racial subgroup benefits from year-round schooling.

Naylor, C. (2012). *Revisiting the issue of year-round schools. BCTF research report. section V. 2012-EI-02*. Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Teachers' Federation. Retrieved on April 21, 2014, from <https://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/2012-EI-02.pdf>

*Abstract:* There has been little attention paid to the issue of Year-Round Schools (YRS) in British Columbia's public education system since 1996. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) Research conducted extensive research into the issue of year-round schooling in the mid 1990s, when the growth in student enrolment was significant. At that time there was considerable interest in multi-track schooling, a concept designed to reduce capital costs by having schools open all year while students attended three of four or four of five tracks. However, operational costs can increase significantly, while in addition the "community" aspect of school is significantly reduced with one cohort of students missing at all times. The remainder of this paper addresses some general issues around school calendars and reviews the more recent literature since the last BCTF Research review.

Newhouse, C., Neely, P., Freese, J., Lo, J., & Willis, S. (2012). *Summer matters: How summer learning strengthens students' success*. Oakland, CA: Public Profit. Retrieved on April 21, 2014, from [http://partnerforchildren.org/storage/documents/2012-13-summer\\_matters\\_casestudy\\_stc.pdf](http://partnerforchildren.org/storage/documents/2012-13-summer_matters_casestudy_stc.pdf)

*Executive Summary (Excerpt):* Unequal access to summer learning and enrichment opportunities is a significant factor in the achievement gap between low-income students and their higher-income peers. This study describes how summer learning programs that provide high quality, engaging enrichment activities are a promising solution to this challenge and can help to narrow our unacceptable achievement gap. This study examines the ways in which summer programs in three different parts of our state—Fresno, Sacramento, and Los Angeles—benefitted children and their families. The study addresses a gap in the existing literature on summer programs in California by examining the extent to which youth attending high quality, academically, socially and physically enriching summer programs demonstrate improved pro-social attachments, academic self-efficacy and motivation, and English Language Arts proficiency.

Ramos, B. K. (2011). Breaking the tradition of summer vacation to raise academic achievement. *ERS Spectrum*, 29(4), 1–20. Retrieved on April 21, 2014, from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ955832>

*Abstract:* This study found that students in settings with a year-round calendar statistically outperformed students with traditional calendars in a school-within-a-school setting in mathematics. The study included reading and math achievement of fifth graders in three school-within-a-school year-round elementary schools. Overall, the study made 16 comparisons of year-round and traditional student achievement and growth. When mean scores were compared in reading and math achievement and growth, all four comparisons favored year-round education.

Only one difference, fifth grade national percentile rank in math, was statistically significant. When student-level variables were controlled, four reading comparisons were not statistically significant. All four math comparisons, however, were statistically significant.

Ramos, B. K. (2012). *Transitioning to year-round education: Satisfaction and factors of choice*. Indianola, IA: Simpson College. Retrieved on April 21, 2014, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED539777.pdf>

*Abstract:* This study examines a mid-west elementary school transitioning from a school-within-a-school calendar, offering both year-round and traditional calendars, to a year-round only calendar. The satisfaction of teachers and families with the transition, and the factors that teachers and families consider in making a calendar selection, were examined using quantitative non-experimental surveys and focus groups. Teachers and families tended to have positive reactions to the transition. Although some traditional calendar teachers and families had a negative initial reaction to the transition, they became more positive during and after the transition. There was a statistically significant difference in the level of satisfaction by calendar for all five questions asked of families, and two out of five questions asked of teachers. The importance of factors influencing calendar selection differed from the survey prior to, and after, the transition. There was a statistically significant difference in all seven factors for families and five out of seven factors for teachers. When factors impacting calendar selection were examined by calendar, three out of eight factors for teachers, and two out of seven factors for families, had a statistically significant difference.

Wu, A. D., & Stone, J. E. (2010). Does year round schooling affect the outcome and growth of California's API scores? *Journal of Educational Research & Policy Studies*, 10(1), 79–97. Retrieved on April 21, 2014, from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ930166>

*Abstract:* This paper examined whether year round schooling (YRS) in California had an effect upon the outcome and growth of schools' Academic Performance Index (API) scores. While many previous studies had examined the connection between YRS and academic achievement, most had lacked the statistical rigor required to provide reliable interpretations. As a response, this study used data collected from 4,569 schools over six years and two integrated and more sophisticated statistical techniques—mixed analysis of covariance and latent growth model. Results showed that YRS did not affect either the outcome or the growth of API scores.

### **Relevant organization and websites**

#### **National Association for Year-Round Education (NAYRE)**

<http://www.nayre.org>

*From the website:* NAYRE is a nationally recognized organization of educators, parents, and businesses working to increase student achievement through its focus on creating effective time on learning. The Association promotes a balanced academic calendar to reduce learning loss and extensive review time that decreases time for new learning.

#### **National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL)**

<http://www.timeandlearning.org>

*From the website:* NCTL is dedicated to expanding learning time to improve student achievement and enable a well-rounded education. Through research, public policy, and technical assistance, we support national, state, and local initiatives that add significantly more school time for academic and enrichment opportunities to help children meet the demands of the 21st century

## **METHODS**

### **Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search**

Search for year-round education and school calendar modification in elementary schools: (“Year-round education” OR “Year-around school” OR “School Calendar Modification”) AND “elementary” (From 2009–2014)

### **Search of Databases**

ERIC, EBSCO, Google, and Google Scholar

### **Criteria for Inclusion**

When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).
- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the Western region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0002, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

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