



Issues in the School Calendar Debate

Local Control

Opponents say:

- Local elected officials are better able to set school calendars for their districts.
- Each district has vastly different needs and that one school start date does not fit all.

Save Kentucky Summers says:

- The local school boards cannot solve this problem because each district aggressively competes with the neighboring district for testing scores and sports advantages. Because of the pressure on administrators to improve CATS Tests., no one school district will chance starting later than their neighboring districts. **The Kentucky legislature is the only group that can fix this problem by legislation.** 11 other states have passed this legislation.
- Parents do not have sufficient input in setting the school calendar. Newspaper, television and web site surveys across Kentucky show 8 out of 10 people support a later August start date.
- Because the state pays the largest portion of the education tab they should ensure non-instructional costs are kept to a minimum. This will ensure the bulk of taxpayer dollars go towards educational programming, classroom supplies and teacher salaries.
- A uniform school start date will level the playing field for not only CATS Testing, but also sports and other academic activities. Providing a uniform start date will ensure all students have the opportunity to receive the same number of instructional days before testing occurs and it will also provide consistent athletic calendars.
- Federal guidelines require Adequate Yearly Progress Reports be provided to parents no later than the first day of school. States that do not meet federal reporting guidelines could lose as much as 25 percent of the administrative portion of Title I funding.

Early August Start Dates allows districts to improve CATS scores.

Opponents Say:

Starting early in August allows schools to get in more “instructional days” prior to the CATS Tests thus improving test scores

Save Kentucky Summers Says:

- Everyone agrees that the almost three weeks of wasted instructional time following the CATS Test is a real problem in Kentucky schools. Moving the CATS Test to the end of the school year would eliminate the need to start earlier and earlier. It would add at least 12 days of instruction right back into the calendar.
- Each year thousands of Kentucky high school students enroll in post-secondary education classes including on-line high school courses via KVHS as well as dual credit college classes. The college classes traditionally start in late August. As a result, students waste between two to four weeks of valuable instructional time waiting for their on-line classes to start; further, this create additional burdens on the local schools to find “activities” to keep these students busy until the college courses begin.

Fall Semester Exams

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 two-week break.

Save Kentucky Summers Says:

- The top 10 academic states, in four commonly used state education ranking systems, have two things in common. They begin the school year in late August or early September and administer their semester tests after the winter break. Long-term learning is enhanced when students have an opportunity to review material for tests. This is called the “spacing effect” and is well documented in psychology literature.
- If taking exams after the winter break is detrimental to student achievement, we at SaveKentuckySummers wonder how our students are able to remember the information long enough to perform well on the CATS tests administered in the spring.

Teacher's Continuing Education

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.

Save Kentucky Summers Says:

- Kentucky Teachers have 10 years from date of initial hire to obtain their Rank 1 Certification. Not being able to take two summer school sessions could negatively impact a teacher's ability to stay current and competitive
- Research shows that students taught by teachers who hold national certification score better on standardized tests. The latest data shows that roughly 3 percent of Kentucky's teachers hold National Board Certification.
- National Board Certified Teachers receive a \$2000.00 annual salary supplement for the life of the certificate each year the board certified teacher teachers or mentors in the area of which s/he holds National Board Certification, as stipulated in KRS157.395.
- Teachers who achieve National Board Certification can apply for a Rank I from the Educational Professional Standards Board. Rank I is the highest rank in Kentucky and allows teachers an increase in salary based on the local district pay scale that considers education level and experience. A later start date would allow our teachers to take two college sessions over the summer.
- 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.
- Requiring teachers to complete the vigorous requirements during the school year takes time away from classroom students. A longer summer may make advanced education programs more appealing and certainly would not do harm.
- 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 school districts' start and end dates.

Operating Costs

Opponents say:

- Temperatures in June are often equal to those of August and pushing back the start date would result in the school year ending late in June

Save Kentucky Summers Says:

- Temperatures in August are much higher than May and June and especially evidenced this year. The costs to cool the schools across the state were enormous this August. Factor into this cost, the cost of air-conditioning repairs and replacements due to overuse. Would not this money be better used to provide small group tutoring for struggling students during the school day, instead of being blown out the window in higher cooling costs?
- By starting school in late August and ending in late May or early June, operating efficiency can be improved by removing the one and two-day breaks in the calendar.

Travel and Tourism

Opponents Say:

- School calendars should not be set around the needs of the tourist industry.

Proponents Say:

- A 2007 independent study funded by the Kentucky Tourism Council reported Kentucky economy loses \$187 million dollars each August due to early August school start dates.
- The Kentucky State Fair has seen a decrease in attendance over the last 10 years, even though the state has seen an increase in general population. This is because all of Kentucky schools are in session during the State Fair making it difficult for families to attend.
- We have found research supporting the need for increased dollars earmarked for education and research touting the benefits of youth work experiences-both afforded by an increase in travel and tourism dollars.

Early August Start Dates Allow More Frequent and Much Needed Breaks During the School Year

Opponents Say:

- Teachers and students enjoy breaks throughout the year and prevent student and teacher burnout.
- More breaks during the school year and a shorter summer break prevents, “Brain Drain” and are better for student achievement.

Save Kentucky Summers Says:

- School calendars with many breaks reduce time on task and interrupt the flow of learning.
- Frequent breaks in the school calendar create childcare nightmares for parents. Parents are often forced to pay higher child care costs and the quality of the programming is less than what is offered during the summer months.
- University of South Carolina Dean of the College of Education, Les Sternberg, says when breaks occur and when tests are administered is irrelevant to test results. Sternberg says he knows of no solid data proving that school start dates affect test scores-either for better or worse.
- We are in favor of repealing the state statute requiring school districts to close for election day in November and primary day in May. This should be the option of each individual school district of whether to close for this reason.
- There is no evidence that frequent breaks improve academic performance. The theory that students could “catch up” during these breaks in reality, does not happen.

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