WORKING GROUP ON ALTERNATIVE CALENDARS

Report to the Legislature

as required by

1998 Minnesota Statutes Chapter 398, Article 5, Section 53, Subd. 1

COMMISSIONER,
CHRISTINE JAX

WORKING GROUP ON ALTERNATIVE CALENDARS

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ESTIMATED COST OF PREPARING THE REPORT

This report required five meetings with the Alternative Calendar Working Group to review models of alternative school calendars and discuss their implications. The report also required contracts for consultation and outside facilitation, research, and report writing. The Department of Children, Families and Learning (DCFL) staff time related directly to the production of this report and was estimated at 265 hours. The Legislature appropriated no money for the preparation of this report. Funding for the facilitation, research, writing, meetings, printing, and a portion of the salaries were allocated from Goals 2000 funding.

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ALTERNATIVE CALENDAR WORKING GROUP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

In the last decade, the number of schools with year-round calendars has increased five-fold. Currently, over 2 million students are enrolled in the more than 2,900 year-round programs in the United States. Interest in alternative school calendars continues to grow as more and more school districts explore ways to manage rapidly increasing enrollments and improve student achievement.

In October 1998, a Working Group was convened to provide independent advice to the State Legislature on alternatives to the traditional nine-month, September through June school year calendar.

Composition of the Committee

Chapter 398, Article 5, Section 53 of the 1998 K-12 Omnibus Bill directed the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning to convene a working group to consider alternative school calendars. The following groups were to be represented in the 12-member Working Group (see Appendix A for a full list of participants): Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Minnesota Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation, Minnesota Business Partnership, Minnesota Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students, Minnesota Education Association, Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, Minnesota Federation of Teachers, Minnesota School Boards' Association, Minnesota State High School League, and Hospitality Minnesota.

Charge to the Working Group

The task before the Working Group was to examine non-traditional school calendars and make recommendations to the Legislature concerning those alternative calendars that best allow school districts to meet the education needs of their students. At a minimum, the group was to review the following types of school calendars: 45-15 schedules, four-quarter schedules, quinmester plans, four-day week plans, extended learning year plans, and flexible all-year plans. In addition, the legislation outlined nine specific issues to be considered by the Working Group:

1. how buildings and other facilities can be optimally used during an entire year;
2. what the optimal learning year schedule is for elementary and secondary disabled students and staff in schools and residential facilities;

3. how a district divides its students among facilities to accommodate an alternative school year calendar;
4. how a district accommodates an alternative school year calendar in the context of the Public Employment Labor Relations Act;
5. what parent involvement is required in establishing an alternative school year calendar;
6. how school staff is assigned in a district with fewer than all facilities adopting an alternative school year calendar;
7. how teachers' contracting rights are affected by an alternative school year calendar;
8. what educational standards and requirements apply to a district operating an alternative school year calendar; and
9. what adjustments of attendance and apportionments of state aid are required and addressed in an alternative school year calendar.

Working Group Process

The Alternative Calendar Working Group met on five occasions beginning in October 1998 and concluding in January 1999 for a total of 20 hours. The Department of Children, Families and Learning secured the services of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota to provide facilitation for the sessions, conduct relevant research, and prepare the final report.

Although the charge of the Working Group was to examine issues regarding the *reallocation* of the existing instructional time through changes in the school calendar, the related issue of *extending or adding* time continued to surface in the broader context of how schools can best utilize instructional time to ensure that all students are well served. While recognizing that the issues of reorganizing and increasing instructional time are closely related and often occur simultaneously, the group agreed to remain focused on programs that restructure existing time by altering the school calendar and, of those, the one most commonly implemented: the year-round school calendar.

In the course of its deliberations, the Working Group reviewed a substantial body of existing written material on alternative school year calendars and solicited additional oral and written input from academic researchers, educational practitioners and administrators, state agency staff, students, and parents. All members of the Working Group reviewed this report and the recommendations herein.

Key Findings

To meet the legislative directives, the Working Group reviewed and discussed different models of alternative calendars, what is known about the effectiveness of the year-round calendar, and issues related to the implementation of alternative calendars in Minnesota over five sessions (see Appendix B for a glossary of key terms). This section summarizes the group's findings as they relate to: (1) the main charge before the group (i.e., determining which alternative school year calendars best allow districts to meet the education needs of their students), (2) the nine issues to be considered in the process, and (3) other key findings regarding alternative school year calendars.

Which alternative calendars best allow school districts to meet the education needs of their students?

The Working Group determined that *no one alternative calendar* currently stands out as being better than the others in allowing districts to best meet the education needs of their students. The effectiveness of alternative school calendars appears to be *context-specific*, depending on the population of students being served, the type of calendar selected, the presence of other educational reforms, and characteristics and needs of the local community.

The continued increase in the number of school districts adopting or exploring the option of alternative calendars suggests that educational and/or fiscal benefits are accruing or are expected to accrue from the move to such calendars.

Research on student achievement indicates that students attending year-round schools will perform as well as, and in some instances, better than students attending schools on a traditional calendar. In a review of 75 studies of student achievement, 36% indicated that students attending year-round schools perform better than students on traditional calendars, 8% found that students on traditional calendars performed better, and 56% showed no difference in student performance by calendar.

In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the more frequent breaks found on year-round schedules improve the overall school climate (e.g., improved attitudes of students and staff, fewer discipline problems) and student and teacher attendance, which may contribute to positive effects on learning.

For districts facing rapid enrollment growth, the adoption of a multi-track, year-round calendar can reduce the number of new buildings that need to be constructed and equipped. Depending on which multi-track calendar is selected, *a building's capacity can be increased from between 25% to 50%.* The most common multi-track calendars (45/15 and 60/20) increase capacity by up to 25% and 33% respectively. Districts that select a multi-track calendar to relieve overcrowding without increasing bonded indebtedness do incur one-time transition costs. These transition costs, however, are more than offset by avoided expense for new facilities.

In addition to allowing districts to avoid capital expenditures when coping with enrollment growth, a multi-track configuration *might also be used to reduce class size* --which is believed to improve student achievement -- and do so within existing facilities.

More research is needed to determine which calendars are best for which students and under what local conditions. Few studies have been conducted in such a way as to differentiate among the overall effectiveness and impact of the various different models of year-round education. And, while some configurations are more common than others (e.g., 45/15, 45/10, 60/15, 60/20), an increasing number of schools are creating new schedules, some of which are extremely flexible and individualized to the student. Future research also needs to explore the impact of a variety of alternative calendars on different student populations (e.g., English

Language Learners, students with disabilities, students in migrant families, gifted and talented, educationally at-risk).

The Nine Legislative Issues

In examining alternative school calendars, the Working Group was also asked to consider nine specific issues. Issues 1 and 2 address the potential for educational and fiscal outcomes while issues 3-9 relate to the implementation of alternative calendars. For each issue, a brief summary of the conclusions emerging from the group's deliberations is presented below. The reader is also referred to the page(s) in the full report that discuss the issue more comprehensively.

Issue 1: How can buildings and other facilities be optimally used during an entire year? (p. 27)

Multi-track year-round calendars and single-track calendars with intersession programming would make better use of existing school buildings and facilities. The addition of intersession programming or extended day and week programs would raise operational costs, however.

Issue 2: What is the optimal learning year schedule for elementary and secondary students with disabilities and staff in schools and residential facilities? (p. 22)

For students with disabilities, school calendars with more frequent and shorter breaks (3-4 weeks) would provide more continuous learning and contact with others. Such a calendar could be expected to: (1) reduce skill regression and the time needed for recoupment in the fall of a traditional calendar, (2) increase opportunities for socialization, and (3) provide more continuous structure throughout the year. Each of these items is of significant benefit to most students who have a disability. Currently, only a small percentage of these students receive services to maintain their current level of basic life skills over the summer break. During the 1997-98 fiscal year, 26,423 special education students (duplicated count by service provided) received Extended School Year services at a cost to the state of more than $10 million. Parents of students who do not receive such services often find it difficult to find accessible summer programming, leaving these children with fewer opportunities for socialization when school is not in session.

Issue 3: How do districts divide students among facilities to accommodate an alternative school year calendar? (p. 38)

The decision to adopt an alternative calendar may be mandatory (e.g., an entire district goes year-round to address rapidly increasing enrollments) or voluntary (e.g., opening a new school as one choice within a district). In either case, the criteria for student placement generally follows district guidelines, with some districts adding sibling preference to assist families in which at least one child already attends year-round schools. For districts considering alternative calendars with multiple tracks, the Flexible Learning Year law (MN Statute 124D.123) requires that

students from the same family be on the same track unless the student receives special education services or the parent requests that their children be on different schedules.

Issue 4: How does a district accommodate an alternative school year calendar in the context of the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA)? (p. 31)

The existing Flexible Learning Year law requires that districts implementing an alternative calendar negotiate with their staff to the extent required by PELRA. It also assures teachers' continuing contract rights for positions held just prior to adoption of an alternative calendar and credit for probationary teaching experience earned during the same period of time.

The Working Group determined that PELRA itself poses no particular challenges for districts implementing an alternative calendar. However, a range of issues would need to be brought to the negotiating table—particularly if district-wide implementation of an alternative calendar was being considered. Some of these issues include: terms of payment for working additional time (e.g., intersessions), choice of track in a multi-track system, calculation of seniority for staff that begin their career at a school with an earlier start date, and timing of notifications about lay-offs or non-renewal of contracts.

Issue 5: What parent involvement is required in establishing an alternative school year calendar? (p. 37-39, 40-41)

Districts that have considered and/or adopted alternative calendars all cite early and continued involvement of parents as an essential, but not the only essential, ingredient in ensuring the success of the endeavor—particularly when a school wants to convert from a traditional to a year-round calendar. Year-round calendars will raise issues in terms of family traditions, economics, and lifestyles, and parents need opportunities to voice their concerns about having children on different school schedules, arranging child care during school breaks, and scheduling family vacations

Issue 6: How is school staff assigned in a district with fewer than all facilities adopting an alternative school year calendar? (p. 31)

When the move to an alternative calendar is not district-wide, Minnesota statute requires school boards to make every reasonable effort to assign qualified teachers who prefer to remain on a traditional schedule to such facilities at the same grade level. Districts also need written consent from full-time teachers before assigning them to a significantly different calendar. In Minnesota, most of the year-round programs were not conversions from traditional calendars but new schools. Thus, teachers voluntarily accepted the calendar with the position.

Issue 7: How are teachers' contracting rights affected by an alternative school year calendar? (p. 31)

While contracts for teachers at schools with alternative calendars may raise some unique issues, the Minnesota schools that have been successful in adopting year-round calendars (all of which are voluntary) worked closely with their unions or charters (see Issue #4 above).

Issue 8: What educational standards and requirements apply to a district operating an alternative school year calendar? (p. 29-31)

Unless instituted under a charter, schools operating on alternative calendars must adhere to the same educational standards and requirements as those on traditional schedules. Two Minnesota requirements, however, were identified as particularly relevant to schools with alternative calendars: state approval for start dates before September 1 and statewide assessments that are administered on dates set by the state.

Issue 9: What adjustments of attendance and apportionments of state aid are required and addressed in an alternative school year calendar? (p. 30, 34)

The simple reallocation of existing instructional days over the entire year does not affect the aid Minnesota schools receive from the state because such apportionments are based on Average Daily Membership rather than Average Daily Attendance. At this time, no special allocations of aid exist for schools with alternative school year calendars unless they also *add* instructional time under the Learning Year program and thus generate additional ADMs. Likewise, funding for transportation costs associated with changes in the school calendar can only be obtained when other conditions are met (e.g., interdistrict, desegregation funds).

Other Key Findings

Finding #1: The most popular alternative to the traditional school year calendar is the year-round calendar. Over 2 million students are enrolled in more than 2,900 year-round schools in 39 states, a five-fold increase in the last decade.

Although other options exist (e.g., four-day weeks and extended year programs), year-round calendars are the most common alternative to the traditional, nine-month, September through June school year. In Minnesota, the typical year-round program is adopted for academic reasons, is voluntary, and operates on a single-track schedule of 45 days on and 15 days off. Such programs are found at both the elementary and secondary school level and while most are single schools, at least two operate as a school-within-a-school.

The Minnesota experience differs somewhat from the national picture in which, as of 1998:

- 77% of all year-round programs operate at the elementary school level.
- 59% of year-round calendars are single-track, 41% multi-track.

Finding #2: The impact of year-round education on the finances of a school or district depends on many aspects of the local context, including calendar selection, class size, transportation needs, intersession programming, staff contract provisions, and the need for air conditioning.

In reviewing information regarding the costs associated with alternative calendars, the Working Group concluded that such costs are dependent on a number of factors, including the nature and circumstances of the implementation. The evidence suggests that some costs *may* increase under a single track, year-round calendar (e.g., transportation, air conditioning) even when no instructional time is added through intersession programming which necessarily raises both the total and per pupil operating costs. In the case of multi-track calendars, however, it is not clear whether per pupil operating expenses would be the same or lower than those with a traditional calendar. It was also suggested that expenses associated with teacher absenteeism, student absenteeism, and vandalism might be reduced in year-round programs. In related discussions, the Working Group reached no conclusions about the relative cost-effectiveness of year-round calendars as a means of improving student achievement as compared to adding instructional time, reducing class size, or adopting other curricular or structural reforms.

Finding #3: Attitudes of parents, transportation, and transitional costs have been the major challenges for Minnesota schools adopting year-round school calendars.

Districts considering implementation of a year-round calendar will need to consider a range of implementation issues including state requirements, staffing, facilities and operations, and the impact on students, families, businesses, and community organizations. In Minnesota, the most significant challenges thus far have related to the concerns of families, transportation costs, and transition costs.

The most often-cited barrier to adoption of a year-round calendar in Minnesota was the attitudes of parents. Even when districts involved parents in the process from the beginning, the adherence to cultural traditions such as family summer vacations and concerns about having children on two different calendars and developing alternative childcare arrangements were often too strong to overcome.

For Minnesota schools that had the support of parents and staff, the increased transportation cost, which arises when operating on a calendar, which does not conform to the district's calendar, and in bringing students to intersession programming was viewed as the next greatest challenge. Finally, transition costs, most notably the capital expense for installation of air conditioning in existing buildings, was also a challenge for some Minnesota schools.

Finding #4: A significant increase in the number of schools and districts operating on a year-round calendar or the consideration of multi-track schedules are anticipated to raise other implementation challenges.

To date in Minnesota, the year-round calendar has been adopted by a small number of schools, on a voluntary basis, and in the single-track format, which has minimized implementation challenges. The following issues would become more important should this pattern change.

Staffing. Teachers who generate income through non-school employment in the summer are likely to be concerned about a change from the traditional calendar. In addition, teachers who have traditionally used the summer to take professional development courses to acquire additional licenses or gain salary increments would need to take advantage of other options. Finally, principals on multi-track calendars or single-track schedules, which include intersession programming, will have an increased workload; avoiding administrator burnout may become a more significant issue in the future.

Students. Concerns about summer employment and participation in sports and extracurricular activities become more significant when a year-round calendar is implemented at the high school level, particularly in a multi-track format.

Businesses. Nationally, members of the business community--particularly those in the tourism and amusement park industries--have raised concern about the impacts on their sales volume and their employee base. While supporting quality education for students, business leaders have expressed doubts about whether altering the calendar or adding instructional days is the best way to improve student achievement. Minnesota business and tourism groups currently have no formal position on alternative school calendars, but some have opposed the pre-Labor Day school start that would be likely even with a single-track calendar. While resorts that are already open year-round might benefit from having families spread their vacations throughout the year, those only open during the summer months might see a significant decrease in their business should a large number of schools or districts adopt a year-round calendar.

Finding #5: Successful planning and implementation of an alternative calendar requires a well-designed process.

The literature review and experiences of schools in Minnesota—both those that have implemented year-round calendars and those that have considered and rejected an alternative calendar—suggest the following general guidelines for implementation:

- **Involve key players.** Involve a variety of stakeholders early on in both the information-gathering and decision-making processes and have them speak with parents, teachers, and administrators who are currently working in year-round schools.

- **Start anew or convert?** Consider the advantages of instituting an alternate calendar as a brand new school or program. If converting from a traditional to a year-round calendar, be sure to get staff on board before proposing a plan to the community.
- **Offer plenty of chances for discussion.** Provide opportunities for small group meetings in which people can raise concerns and get answers to their questions.
- **Have a clear understanding of the context.** Be clear about the reasons you want to adopt an alternative calendar, the advantages and disadvantages of the calendar, and how this effort fits into the larger improvement agenda of the district.
- **Understand the curricular impact.** Consider the curricular revisions and staff development necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities of a year-round calendar.
- **Be prepared for opposition.** Know that research can and will be marshaled to support the positions of those on all sides of the year-round debate; a small, but vocal, minority of opponents can prevent implementation
- **Seek out funding.** Identify funding sources for transitional costs and operational costs such as intersession programming.

Also be advised that the level of community and staff opposition is likely to be much higher when the proposed model has any of the following characteristics:

- the plan is mandatory rather than voluntary,
- the plan is voluntary, but families and staff have few other options within the district,
- a multi-track calendar is being considered, and
- high school(s) are included.

Finding #6: More needs to be known about the planning, implementation, and impact of alternative calendars in Minnesota and the ways in which these issues change for different models and under different conditions.

Despite the continued growth of alternative school year programs in Minnesota, Working Group members were concerned that little is known about their impact on achievement or the planning and implementation processes involved. Moreover, because the Minnesota programs are voluntary, single-track programs adopted for the primary purpose of improving student achievement, little is known about the likelihood of success or failure for other models of alternative calendars and under other circumstances. For example, how does the implementation process differ when programs on a traditional calendar are converted to alternative calendars as opposed to starting a brand new program? How are students, families, area businesses and local communities affected when an entire district adopts a nontraditional calendar? What is the impact of programs that include multi-track, extended year, or four-day week components? Finally, what are the long-term educational and fiscal effects of alternative school calendars?

Recommendations

On the basis of these key findings, the Alternative Calendar Working Group makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1:

The adoption of alternative school year calendars in Minnesota should be a voluntary, locally controlled choice adapted to fit the local context.

Educational research and the experiences of Minnesota schools currently operating on year-round schedules strongly suggest that educational benefits may indeed accrue from the adoption of an alternative school calendar. This Working Group thus recommends that the adoption of alternative school calendars be supported as a choice at the local level to acknowledge the fact that circumstances of school districts throughout the state can vary greatly. Within a given context, both the reasons for adopting an alternative calendar and the potential barriers to be faced will differ. For example, variation may occur because of the location (e.g., urban vs. rural); economics (e.g., importance of tourism or agriculture to the local economy); nature and scope of implementation (e.g., voluntary or mandatory; whole district, single- or multiple-building, school-within-a-school), or enrollment patterns (e.g., increasing, steady, or decreasing).

In discussing the need to support choice for alternative calendars at the local level, the Working Group also questioned the necessity of the current requirement that schools adopting such calendars apply for state board approval under the Flexible Learning Year program.

Recommendation #2:

To facilitate informed choices about alternative school year calendars, the Department of Children, Families & Learning should make existing research and other information to guide planning and implementation readily available to local school districts.

Districts contemplating the adoption of an alternative calendar typically convene special task forces or working groups to collect and evaluate relevant information. These groups would benefit greatly from centralized access to a clearinghouse that provides: the latest research on the impact of different school calendars, planning and implementation guides, descriptions of and contact information for schools operating on alternative calendars, summaries of "best practices" models, and links to other resources and assistance available from the state.

Recommendation #3:

Minnesota should expand its current Extended Day and Year-Round Pilot Programs into demonstration projects that generate, test, and disseminate models of "best practices." More research is needed to determine which models of alternative calendars work best for different populations of students.

When asked what the state could do to facilitate their efforts, administrators at the Minnesota year-round schools we interviewed offered the following ideas:

- pilot programs across the state "so people can see it works,"
- offer incentives for schools to try an alternative calendar, and
- make funding available to cover some of the additional costs associated with implementation and intersessions.

Before the Working Group could recommend financial incentives to encourage districts to pursue year-round education options (e.g., funds for transitional costs) the members felt that further evidence on the effectiveness and impact of alternative calendars was needed.

The Working Group thus proposes that the current Extended Learning and Year-Round Pilot Program be expanded and extended to allow more districts to become demonstration sites and to incorporate more careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of key processes (e.g., barriers to planning and implementation), outcomes (e.g., student achievement, behavior, and attitudes), and program effectiveness (e.g., cost-benefit analyses, identification of key program features). In particular, we propose evaluations of programs that *reallocate* and/or *increase* the time available for instruction.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In the last decade, the number of schools with year-round calendars increased five-fold. Currently, over 2 million students are enrolled in the more than 2,900 year-round programs in the United States. Interest in alternative school calendars continues to grow as more and more school districts explore ways to manage rapidly increasing enrollments and improve student achievement.

In response to increasing interest and activity nationwide, a Working Group was convened in October 1998 to provide independent advice to the State Legislature on alternatives to the traditional nine-month, September through June school year calendar.

1.2 COMPOSITION OF THE WORKING GROUP

Chapter 398, Article 5, Section 53 of the 1998 K-12 Omnibus Bill directed the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning to convene a working group to consider alternative school calendars. The following groups were to be represented in the Working Group (see the Appendix A for a full list of participants):

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- Minnesota Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
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- Minnesota Business Partnership
- Minnesota Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students
- Minnesota Education Association
- Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association
- Minnesota Federation of Teachers
- Minnesota School Boards' Association
- Minnesota State High School League
- Hospitality Minnesota

The Working Group consisted of 12 members and was assisted in its efforts by an outside facilitator, a small research staff, the Department of Children, Families & Learning, and several outside consultants.

1.3 CHARGE TO THE WORKING GROUP

The task before the Working Group was to examine non-traditional school calendars and make recommendations to the Legislature concerning those alternative calendars that best allow school districts to meet the education needs of their students. At a minimum, the group was to review the following types of school calendars: 45-15 schedules, four-quarter schedules, quinmester plans, four-day week plans, extended learning year plans, and flexible all-year plans. In addition, the legislation outlined nine specific issues to be considered by the Working Group:

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In the course of its deliberations, the Working Group reviewed a substantial body of existing written material on alternative school year calendars and solicited additional oral and written input from academic researchers, educational practitioners and administrators, state agency staff,

students, and parents. All members of the Working Group reviewed this report and the recommendations herein.

1.5 FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report begins by clarifying the difference between alternative calendars and initiatives that add time to the school day, week, and year and reviewing recent Minnesota legislation related to these issues. Section 2 also provides an overview of the types of alternative calendars in existence across the United States and describes the experiences of 11 Minnesota schools that have chosen to follow a year-round schedule. Interviews with administrators at these schools included questions regarding: (1) the reasons for and process of switching to an alternative calendar; (2) barriers encountered in the implementation and ongoing operation of a year-round schedule; (3) the impact of this change on student achievement and other related outcomes; and (4) whether the school also elected to increase instructional time through extended day, week, or year programming.

The choice of school calendar and its educational and fiscal impacts are further addressed in Section 3 in an examination of the impact of year-round education (YRE). This review organizes the potential impact into educational and fiscal outcomes and presents evidence, both research-based and anecdotal, to support or refute such claims.

Turning to the practical side, Section 4 explores issues related to the planning and implementation of year-round educational programs. Topics include: (1) the impact of existing Minnesota standards and requirements; (2) considerations related to staffing; (3) considerations related to facilities and operations; and (4) the impact on students, families, businesses and communities. Finally, the Working Group's key findings and recommendations are summarized in Section 5.

SECTION 2: ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CALENDARS

In the past ten years, increasing numbers of schools in the United States have adopted calendars that differ from the traditional nine-month, September through June schedule. Whether to improve student achievement or manage increasing enrollments within existing facilities, such decisions are generally based on input from students, teachers, and parents and information provided by clearinghouses such as the National Association for Year-Round Education (NAYRE) and the Minnesota Association for Year-Round Education (MAYRE). In Minnesota, year-round education has taken on new meaning as districts consider its potential for helping students achieve the state's graduation standards.

Although the charge of the Working Group was to examine a number of alternatives to the traditional school calendar, time constraints led to a decision to focus efforts on a more thorough examination of the most common scheduling alternative, the year-round calendar. Two other options, the extended year and four-day week, are discussed briefly as models that add time to the school day and year. This section closes with descriptions of year-round programs in Minnesota.

2.1 MODELS OF ALTERNATIVE CALENDARS

The traditional school calendar typically follows a nine-month, September to June schedule, operating five days a week with a 12-week summer vacation. In contrast, year-round schools (YRS) have reorganized the school calendar such that blocks of instruction and vacation are spread throughout the year to make learning more continuous. Such programs do not necessarily add to the instructional days required of students, but simply reallocate the typical 180 school days. In some cases, schools moving to a year-round calendar also make changes to the length of the school day, week, or year that may or may not add instructional time over the course of a year. Programs that add instructional time to the school day, week, or year are generally referred to as extended learning programs (e.g., extended day, week, or year).

The earliest record of a formal year-round education program in the United States was in 1904 in Bluffton, Indiana. This reform was intended as a means of increasing school building capacity and student achievement, the two most common reasons for adopting a year-round calendar yet today.[1] By offering shorter but more frequent breaks, the year-round calendar is thought to enhance learning by minimizing summer learning loss, offering more frequent opportunities remediation or enrichment, facilitating the implementation of creative curricular programs, and improving the attitudes and attendance of students and teachers.[2] The potential cost savings from serving more students in existing buildings is another incentive.

[1] D. Glines, *Year-Round Education: History, Philosophy, Future* (San Diego, CA: National Association for Year-Round Education, 1995).

[2] J. Costa, "Comparative Outcomes of the Clark County School District Year-Round and Nine-Month Schools" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1987), abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International* 48 (1997): 2495; J. Zykowski, et al., *A Review of Year-Round Education Research* (Riverside, CA: California Educational

2.1.1 Single- and Multi-Track Models

Year-round schools are typically implemented as single-track programs (unified attendance), multi-track programs (staggered attendance), or some combination of the two. Single-track programs allow the entire student body and staff to follow the same school calendar and generally include a summer break for students and staff of four to eight weeks.

Multi-track programs divide students and teachers into groups and assign each group to one of several tracks with staggered instructional blocks and vacation periods. In addition to the three- or four-week vacations spread throughout the year, multi-track programs generally have late December and summer breaks (one to two weeks in length) which are common across all tracks. Multi-track calendars are primarily implemented as a way to serve increased enrollments within existing facilities.[3]

Both single- and multi-track year-round calendars can be implemented on either a voluntary basis (as a schedule choice within a school or as a school choice within a district) or a mandatory basis.

Figure 1 on page 7 provides a visual comparison of the traditional school calendar to single-track and multi-track versions of one of the more popular year-round calendars.[4]

2.1.2 Prevalence of Year-Round Programs in the United States

According to figures for the 1998-99 school year, 2,986 year-round schools (YRS) are in operation throughout the United States, Canada, and the Pacific Region with 98% of these located in the U.S. Of these, 59% are single-track and 41% are multi-track.[5] These figures represent a five-fold increase from just ten years ago when only 494 public schools in the U.S. were on a year-round calendar. The number of students enrolled in year-round schools has increased almost 400%, from 428,961 in 1988-89 to over 2 million a decade later (see Table 1).[6]

Research Cooperative, 1991) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 330 040; M. Stenvall, *A Checklist for Success* (San Diego, CA: National Association for Year-Round Education, 1997); B. Worthen and S. Zsiray, *What Twenty Years of Educational Studies Reveal About Year-Round Education* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina Educational Policy Research Center, 1994) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 373 413, 1994.

[3] Costa, "Comparative Outcomes of the Clark County School District"; J. Hazelton, C. Blakely and J. Denton, *The Cost-Effectiveness of Alternative Year School: Final Report* (Austin, TX: Educational Economic Policy Center, 1992) cited in C.C. Kneese, "Review of Research on Student Learning in Year-Round Education," *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 29 (2): 60-72 (1996); Zykowski et al., *A Review of Year-Round Education Research.*

[4] Socorro Independent School District, "Year-Round Education: The 21st Century Calendar" (El Paso, TX. Socorro Independent School District, 1998, photocopy).

[5] National Association for Year-Round Education, *Twenty-Fifth Reference Directory of Year-Round Education Programs for the 1998-99 School Year* (San Diego, CA: National Association for Year-Round Education, 1998).

[6] National Association for Year-Round Education, "Unpublished Fact Sheet," (San Diego, CA: National Association for Year-Round Education, 1998, photocopy).

Currently, 39 states have year-round educational programs. Of the public schools adopting a year-round calendar in the U.S., three out of four are elementary schools. Fewer than 10% of all year-round public education programs are located in high schools (see Table 2).

2.1.3 Year-Round Calendar Models

Many variations of year-round schedules have been implemented throughout this century. Estimates on the exact number vary, although it has been estimated that at least 50 different scheduling patterns exist.[7] Table 3 lists the types of year-round calendars and the number of schools adopting them. The most common of these are described below.[8]

45/15 and 45/10: These two schedules account for the largest portion of all year-round calendars (39.5%). In the 45/15 system, 45 days of instruction are followed by 15 days of vacation. The related 45/10 plan provides an additional four-week common vacation for staff and students. As with most year-round schedules, either of these plans may be implemented in either a single-track or multi-track system. When used on a multi-track system, there are four groups of students, one of which is always on vacation.

60/20 and 60/15: In this calendar, the year is divided into three 60-day sessions with three 20-day vacation periods. A variation on this schedule is the 60/15, which allows for an additional three to four-week common vacation. Again, this plan may be carried out under a single-track or multi-track model. Together, these two types of calendars account for 36.1% of all year-round schools

Other less common year-round calendar configurations include:

Concept 6: Another model divides the school year into six terms of 40 to 44 days. Students and teachers attend two consecutive sessions and then have one session off.

90/30: This schedule is similar to the 45/15 and 60/20, except that students attend school for two 90-day learning blocks with 30-day vacations in between.

Orchard Plan: A variation of the 60/20 or 60/15 schedule is the Orchard Plan, which divides students into five tracks with four tracks in attendance at any point of time. Each classroom consists of seven students from each of the five tracks. Since one track is always on vacation, 28 to 35 students would be present at any given time in a classroom. On this schedule, teachers work 11 months of the year.

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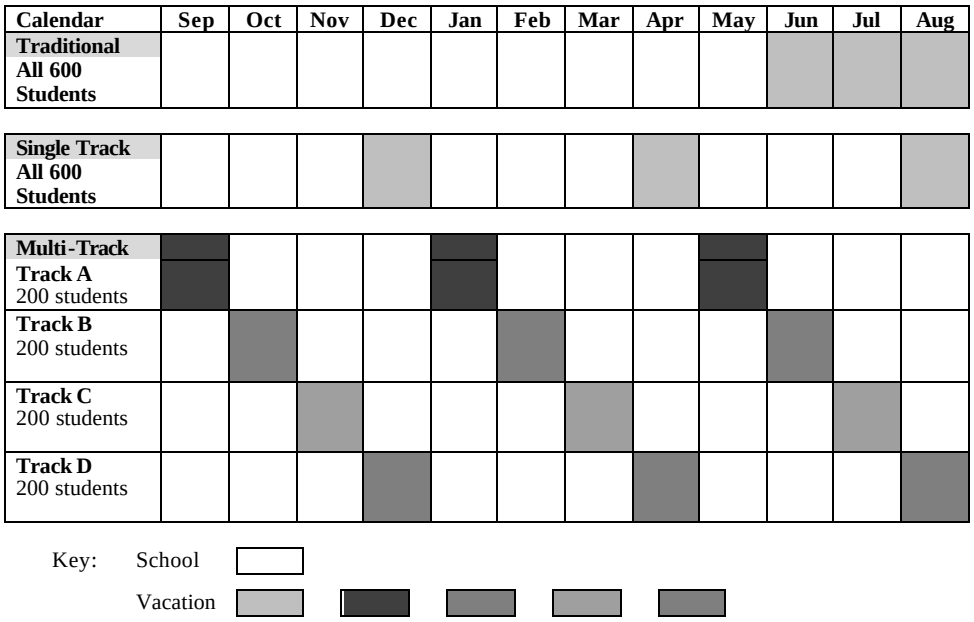
[7] C. Quinlan et al., *Year-Round Education: Year-Round Opportunities. A Study of Year-Round Education in California* (Los Angeles, CA: California State Department of Education, 1987) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 285 272.

[8] Glines, *Year-Round Education: History, Philosophy, Future*; NAYRE, *Twenty-Fifth Reference Directory of Year-Round Education Programs.*

Figure 1. Comparison of traditional calendar to single-track and multi-track year-round school calendars.*



*For illustrative purposes, the following assumptions were made: 1) the school building can accommodate 600 students at one time, 2) a 60-20 calendar is used, 3) school starts September 1 for all calendars (with Track A students starting October 1) and ends June 1 for traditional calendar, 4) winter and spring break are not indicated graphically, and 5) full capacity increase can be obtained.

Table 1. Current status of U.S. year-round programs.

Number of states	39
Number of districts	597
Number of public and private schools	2,931
Public and private enrollment	2,057,190

Note: Includes both public and private schools.
Source: NAYRE, *Twenty-Fifth Reference Directory of Year-Round Education Programs*

Table 2. Current status of U.S. *public* schools on year-round calendar.

Type of school	# Schools	Enrollment	Percentage
Elementary schools	2,285	1,563,876	76.6%
Middle/junior high schools	280	258,670	12.7%
High schools	222	195,713	9.6%
Special schools	69	22,352	1.1%
Total	2,856	2,040,611	100%

Source: NAYRE, *Twenty-Fifth Reference Directory of Year-Round Education Programs*

Table 3. Current types of year-round calendars and their prevalence.

Type of calendar	Number of schools	Percentage
60/20, 65/20	907	30.4
60/15, 60/10	170	5.7
45/15, 40/15	866	29.0
45/10, 45/5	321	10.8
Other[1]	358	12.0
Concept 6	224	7.5
90/30	95	3.2
25/5, 30/5, 30/10, 35/10	30	1.0
50/10, 50/15, 55/18	8	0.3
Orchard Plan	7	0.2
Total[2]	2,986	100.0

Notes:
[1] Any other plan which has 8 weeks or less of summer vacation (e.g., alternative, continuous/flexible all-year, extended year)
[2] Includes U.S., Canadian, and Pacific Region schools
Source: NAYRE, *Twenty-Fifth Reference Directory of Year-Round Education Programs*

Finally, some year-round school calendars divide the year into four or five different segments or completely customize attendance plans:

Four Quarter Plan: Students are required to attend three of four 12-week terms (fall, winter, spring and summer), but may elect to go all four.

Quinmester Plan: Similar to the four-quarter plan, students either select or are assigned to attend four of five 9-week quinmesters.

Flexible All-Year: In this completely individualized schedule the school is open 230 to 250 days. Students set their own schedules as long as they attend a total of 180 days. The curriculum necessarily revolves around shorter, self-contained, self-paced packages, which can be used individually or in small groups to allow for interruptions in the blocks of learning time (i.e. vacation periods may last from one day to several weeks and occur at any time).

Personalized Continuous Year: As with the flexible all-year plan, buildings are open 230 to 250 days with students attending any of the days as long as they meet the minimum required by the state. Unlike other year-round calendars, this plan has no predefined blocks of instructional time or curriculum packages to be completed. Learning is entirely flexible and personalized; students can come and go as desired on a daily basis as long as they continue to accumulate and eventually log the required number of days.

2.1.4 Extended Year

In addition to spreading existing instructional days out over the entire year, many schools also elect to *increase the amount of instructional time* available to students. Schools on traditional or year-round calendars often extend learning time through special programs scheduled before or

after school (extended day), on Saturdays (extended week), and over the summer (extended year).[9] Others institute longer school days or school years.[10] Many year-round schools also extend their school year by offering programs during the more frequent breaks in instruction, known as intersessions. Typical intersession programs include enrichment or remedial classes. While academically at-risk students may be required to attend some extended learning programs, they are typically open to all interested students.

Examples of year-round Minnesota schools that have also chosen to add instructional time include Rutherford Elementary in Stillwater where students attend school for one hour longer than at other elementary schools in the district in order to offer required Spanish and physical education. The Skills for Tomorrow Charter School in St. Paul operates on year-round calendar and includes a required summer term.

2.1.5 Four-Day Week

Reallocation of instructional time may also occur by moving to a four-day school week. In this instance, students have one day "off" each week—typically a Monday or Friday—with the fifth day being used for special activities, remediation or enrichment, or being designated as a non-school day. This type of schedule provides for fewer, but longer, school days throughout the year. Consequently, the year is usually 145 to 150 days long with each day being about 6½ to 7½ hours long.[11]

The primary reason for a move to this type of calendar is decreasing enrollments coupled with financial cutbacks.[12] A key assumption of this model is that by limiting the number of days a school building is in operation, cost savings may accrue. It has been estimated that approximately 200 schools in 11 states have gone to a four-day week, with the majority of these schools located in rural areas.[13]

Most of the data on the impact of the four-day week comes from studies of schools in New Mexico, Oregon, and Colorado.[14]

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[9] F. Olatokunbo, "Report No. 24: Review of Extended-Day and After-School Programs and their Effectiveness" (Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk, Johns Hopkins University, 1998).

[10] N. Adelman, ed., *Research Review: Educational Uses of Time*, a report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education (Washington, D.C.: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 1992)

[11] J. Pope and R. Gillian, R., "The Four Day Week: An Alternative School Calendar" (Medford, OR: Southern Oregon Research and Development C Committee, 1984) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 245 345.

[12] E. Grau and M. Shaughnessy, "The Four Day School Week: An Investigation and Analysis" (1987) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 317 337.

[13] R. Sagness and S. Salzman, "Evaluation of the Four-Day School Week in Idaho Suburban Schools" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association, Jackson, WY, October 1993) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 362 995.

[14] Findings suggest comparable levels of student achievement, lower dropout rates, decreased absenteeism among students and teachers, and reduced operating costs. Grau and Shaughnessy, "The Four Day School Week"; J. Daly and R. Richburg, "Student Achievement in the Four-Day School Week" (Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Department of Education, 1984) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 252 346; J. Reinke, "More With Four: A Look at the Four Day Week in Oregon's Small Schools" (paper presented at the Rural Education Symposium, Washington, D.C., March 1987) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 297 919; Sagness and Salzman, "Evaluation of the Four-Day School Week in Idaho."

2.2 MINNESOTA PROGRAMS

Two laws enacted by the Minnesota Legislature may affect schools interested in pursuing an alternative calendar. One, the Flexible Learning Year program, addresses options for rearranging the school calendar without adding time. The other, the Learning Year program, provides schools with an option to accelerate learning by adding time to the traditional school year. Some year-round schools in Minnesota have taken advantage of the latter program to add instructional time to their year and generate additional general education revenue. This section provides an overview of these laws and describes the experiences of eleven Minnesota schools operating on year-round calendars, based on telephone interviews conducted during January 1999.

2.2.1 Flexible Learning Year

Minnesota's Flexible Learning Year law currently allows schools to implement calendars that differ from the traditional nine-month, September through June calendar (Minn. Stat. 124D.12 to 124D.127). Students attending programs with alternative schedules do not generate additional state aid unless additional days are also included (see Learning Year Programs below). At this time, schools implementing alternative schedules must receive approval from the State Board of Education.

2.2.2 Learning Year Programs

Programs that accelerate learning by extending the school year are funded by the Learning Year Program (Minn. Stat. 124D.128, 126C.05, subd 15). This program allows school districts to report greater than one Average Daily Membership (ADM) for a student if that student is in an approved program and the district ensures that the student does not generate additional pupil units over the student's career. Students attending area learning centers and approved alternative schools may be counted for greater than one ADM without restrictions.

Students who attend alternative programs during the summer, dual-enroll at a traditional school and an alternative school, or earn more than one ADM during the school year generate additional pupil units for districts. These are above and beyond the pupil units earned by students for regular instructional programs during the regular school year. These pupil units generate additional revenues for the school districts for the additional time spent in education programs, which in most cases are compensatory.

During the 1997-98 school year, 106 school districts reported 5,412.17 additional ADM's as defined above, which earned $17,097,163 for these districts.

2.2.3 Year-Round School/Extended Week or Day Pilot Programs

The 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 Omnibus K-12 Education Bills have provided funds for year-round, extended year, and extended day or week pilot projects. Such programs are viewed as a way to increase student achievement, skills, and self-confidence through the more flexible use of

learning time. To be eligible, districts were required to submit plans for developing and implementing programs that included the following elements:

1. more time for student learning;
2. more varied resources to meet student learning styles;
3. learning opportunities that typically are not available in the regular student day;
4. home, school and community involvement, support, and communication;
5. preprogram and postprogram student evaluations; and
6. more efficient use of facilities and other resources.

The grants could be used for planning, flexible staffing, transportation, technology necessary to implement the year-round school or extended learning time program, or to install or improve heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems in existing buildings to accommodate year-round use of the buildings. The grants could also be used for deferred maintenance approved by the Commissioner.

The 1995 and 1996 bills provided $1.8 million to fund seven pilot sites. Four districts were stipulated for grants, and $400,000 was provided for three rural districts to be selected through competitive applications. The stipulated districts were:

White Bear Lake, No. 624	$500,000
St. Paul, No. 625	300,000
So. Wash. County, No. 833	500,000
Cambridge, No. 911	100,000

The rural districts awarded competitive grants were:

McGregor, No. 4	$125,000
New Country School, No. 4007	125,000
Consortium of No. Branch, Rush City and Chisago Lakes	150,000

The 1997 and 1998 bills provided an additional $2,255,000 for pilot sites. The following districts were stipulated to receive grants totaling $1,180,000:

White Bear Lake, No. 624	$500,000
Cambridge, No. 911	225,000
Albert Lea, No. 241	250,000
Hastings, No. 200	105,000
Hopkins, No. 270	100,000

In addition, South Washington County, No. 833, received $200,000 for a four-period day pilot program.

Competitive grants totaling $875,000 were also to be awarded in this round with the legislation stating that new recipients were to be given preference. Districts receiving competitive grant awards were:

Montrose Elementary, Buffalo	$208,701
St. Paul Family Charter School	31,000
Garden City Elementary, Osseo	190,000
Kenwood Elementary, Duluth	150,000
Stillwater, No. 834	295,199

The Department of Children, Families and Learning has contracted with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota to conduct an evaluation of these pilot programs. A report describing the programs from the first set of pilot sites and their impact was prepared for the 1998 legislative session. While the results were generally quite positive, a more comprehensive evaluation would be required to identify the implementation issues and impact to be expected from specific types of programs. An interim report on the second set of recipients will be available for the 1999 legislative session.

2.2.4 Study of Summer Learning Loss

A criticism of the traditional, nine-month school calendar is the potential for some students to experience learning loss over the summer break and thus increase the need for review in the fall. In contrast, year-round schools spread instructional time out over the entire year with shorter, but more frequent breaks, making learning more continuous. Building on prior research in this area, four Minnesota school districts are studying the effects of summer vacation on student achievement. The Anoka-Hennepin, Elk River, North Branch, and South Washington County school districts have teamed up with the Minnesota Association for Year-Round Educational (MAYRE) and the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota to monitor trends in students' learning loss over the upcoming summer months.

A comprehensive review of the research on summer learning loss showed a loss of about one month with these effects being "more detrimental for math than for reading and most detrimental for math computation and spelling."[15] In addition, lower-income students' reading skills tended to decline while middle-class students' increased. Finally, learning loss was found to increase in the upper grade levels.

The Minnesota study builds upon these findings while also addressing some limitations of previous studies. The main criticism of earlier studies is that they confound the results by testing students early in the spring and later in the fall. Thus, students receive additional instruction after the initial pre-test and before the final post-test. In this study, a total of 360 fifth graders will be tested across the four districts using standardized tests of reading and math. Students will be randomly assigned to four groups. All students will be tested *immediately* after school lets out and retested at one of four 3-week intervals, which corresponds to the length of the typical

[15] H. Cooper, "The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review," *Review of Educational Research* 66(3): 227-268 (1996).

intersession (e.g., 3, 6, 9, or 12 weeks). This staggered testing will allow the researchers to examine learning loss over time to determine when it is most likely to occur.

Key to understanding summer learning loss is students' opportunities for formal and informal learning over the summer months (e.g., summer school, camps, vacations, reading). This study will collect data on the nature of students' summer activities, gender, and socioeconomic status and use this information to examine more closely the patterns of learning loss. The results of this study will be available December 1999.

2.2.5 Year-Round Programs in Minnesota

To learn about the experience of schools operating on a year-round calendar in Minnesota, 15 of these schools were contacted during January 1999. While most had appeared either in the National Association for Year-Round Education's *Reference Directory of Year-Round Education Programs for the 1997-98 School Year* or on a list provided by the Department of Children, Families & Learning, these 15 schools were not presumed to be a comprehensive listing of all Minnesota schools operating on an alternative calendar.

Telephone interviews were conducted with the principals or directors of 11 schools. In addition to demographic information, interviewees were questioned about reasons for implementing the year-round calendar, the process used to engage stakeholders, barriers to implementation and their resolution, the impact of the calendar on students and staff, and the need for additional state assistance.

An additional four interviews were conducted with individuals from schools with alternative calendars; however, these did not meet the definition used in this report for year-round education and thus are not included in the results reported below.[16] Contact information for 16 Minnesota schools operating on alternative calendars is located in Appendix C.

All of the Minnesota programs began in the 1990's, with all but two having a year-round calendar since their inception. Six of the schools are elementary and five are secondary (middle or senior high school). All are voluntary, single-track programs. The most common type of year-round calendar in Minnesota, the 45/15, was chosen in many cases because it was the easiest to align with the traditional calendar followed by the rest of the schools in the district. Intersession programming is offered for the purposes of remediation and/or academic enrichment by eight of the schools, with attendance being voluntary. Finally, five schools have extended day, week, and/or year programs. Table 4 on the next page provides a summary of the demographics of the 11 Minnesota programs.

Asked why they had implemented a year-round calendar, respondents offered a variety of answers. The most common reason was a desire to decrease summer learning loss by shortening

[16] Specifically, these programs either: 1) offer optional summer sessions so that students choosing not to enroll in the summer have an 8-12 week summer vacation (in the case of City Academy, North Branch High School, and Rosemount Area Learning Center), 2) do not spread vacation time throughout the year (in the case of Edison Kenwood Charter School in Duluth), or 3) are home-based, individualized instructional programs in which students whether to work through the summer (in the case of TRIO).

the long summer vacation. The potential to extend learning and narrow the achievement gap was also highlighted by four interviewees as an added benefit of intersessions that afford opportunities for academic enrichment and remediation. As one principal commented, "You're really leveling the playing field for students." Other reasons offered less frequently were that a year-round calendar provides students with a continuous connection to school, offers a choice to students and parents, may improve student performance and/or behavior, and provides an opportunity to explore how year-round education may help the district contend with anticipated enrollment growth.

Outcomes from these Minnesota schools with year-round calendars are examined in Section 3, while barriers encountered during implementation are discussed further in Section 4.

SECTION 3:
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

Like most educational reforms, research on the effectiveness of year-round schools (YRS) has lagged far behind their implementation. Although YRS have existed for almost a century, research from the last three decades falls short in preparing schools and policy-makers to make decisions regarding a change in school calendar. This is indicated quite clearly in the results of an extensive review of the literature on year-round education (YRE) that was presented to the Alternative Calendar Working Group.[1] The following discussion of this research highlights the perceived advantages and disadvantages of alternative calendars and the evidence to support or refute such claims. Such evidence also includes anecdotal data made available to the Working Group.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It is clear from the literature that both advantages and disadvantages are associated with year-round education.[2] Some of the perceived advantages are:

- improved achievement,
- improved teacher and student attendance,
- fewer discipline problems,
- reduced teacher stress,
- increased motivation among teachers and students,
- increased opportunities for enrichment and remediation, and
- increased choice for parents, teachers, and staff.

Other benefits attributed only to multi-track programs include easing of overcrowding, reduction in class size, opportunities for teachers to work year-round, and more efficient use of facilities with the added potential for cost savings.[3]

Perceived disadvantages stem primarily from difficulties related to scheduling:

- increased administrator burn-out,
- conflicts between family vacations and school or community activities,
- difficulty in arranging day care,
- siblings on different attendance schedules,

[1] E. Palmer and A. Bemis, "Year-Round Education," in *Just in Time Research: Children, Youth & Families* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1999).
[2] Stenvall, *A Checklist for Success*; Worthen and Zsiray, *What Twenty Years of Educational Studies Reveal About Year-Round Education*.
[3] N. Brekke, "Year-Round Schools: An Efficient and Effective Use of Resources," *School Business Affairs* (1992), 27-37, cited in Kneese, "Review of Research on Student Learning in Year-Round Education;" Stenvall, *A Checklist for Success*.

- difficulty in scheduling teacher in-service days, and
- increased costs of operation.

In addition, the multi-track schedule may require additional operating costs, lack sufficient time for routine maintenance, be inconvenient for teachers (who may have to change classrooms during the year), result in overworked clerical staff or administration, increase difficulties in communicating with staff or parents, and result in some students missing school events scheduled at off-track times.[4]

3.2 EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Evidence regarding the impact of year-round schooling on educational outcomes is less than definitive. These outcomes include student achievement and factors that ultimately influence student performance, such as student and teacher attitudes and attendance, and student behavior.[5] Because of variation in the quality of the available research, the review of YRE presented to the Working Group only reported results from more well designed studies, which utilized appropriate comparison groups and tests of statistical significance. Consequently, these studies either compared the achievement of students both before and after moving to a year-round schedule or compared the scores of students attending schools with year-round programs to those attending schools with a traditional schedule. The use of statistical tests further implies that any findings were not simply characteristic of the students or schools that happened to be involved in the single study, but would represent all such students or schools (e.g., all elementary students, all at-risk students, all boys or girls). Good research allows us to highlight what we *really* know about the effects of YRE instead of relying on just our perceptions.

3.2.1 Student Achievement

Prior to 1980, few studies of the effects of year-round education on student achievement were published. Since then, the number of studies has increased along with the interest in alternative school calendars and the adoption of year-round programs. The 1998 review identified 33 studies, of which 19 provided data that could be used to examine the relationship between student achievement and the school calendar.[6]

[4] Stenvall, *A Checklist for Success*; Worthen and Zsiray, *What Twenty Years of Educational Studies Reveal About Year-Round Education*.

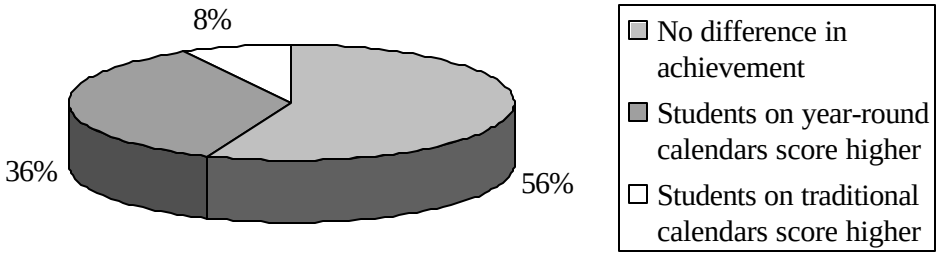
[5] It has been suggested that the advantages and disadvantages of year-round models discussed below are due more to their status as single- or multi-track rather than to the particularities of a 45/15 vs. a 60/20 vs. a Concept 6 schedule, for example.

[6] Our search of the literature identified only three studies with achievement data prior to 1980. Two recent meta-analyses—Kneese, "Review of Research on Student Learning in Year-Round Education" and W. Winters, "A Review of Recent Studies Relating to the Achievement of Students Enrolled in Year-Round Schools" (San Diego, CA: National Association for Year-Round Education, 1995)—were also acquired and compared to our sample. Winters' review was based primarily on evaluation studies readily available to the National Association for Year-Round Education. Kneese's study included a more exhaustive search of the literature. Our sample included all but six of the studies reviewed by Kneese (four evaluation reports and two dissertations) as well as many others.

From these studies, a total of 75 individual comparisons of standardized achievement tests in reading, math, language, writing, science, social studies, or the complete battery were obtained.[7] Most included elementary schools that had followed a year-round schedule for three to five years, while the others had implemented such programs from one to twenty-one years ago.

Of the 75 comparisons, 42 showed no clear pattern or effect on student achievement that could be attributed to the school calendar while 27 showed a positive effect for the year-round calendar and 6 showed a positive effect for the traditional calendar (see Table 5 on the following page). In other words, 36% indicated that students attending year-round schools perform better than students on traditional calendars, 8% showed that students on traditional calendars perform better, and 56% showed no difference in student performance by calendar (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Comparison of achievement for students attending schools with year-round versus traditional, nine-month calendars.



In sum, it is reasonable to conclude from these studies that students attending YRS may perform at least as well as and sometimes better than their peers in traditional nine-month programs, especially at the upper elementary school level.[8] However, important factors including other structural reforms that add time to the school day, week, or year; innovations in curriculum and instruction; the effects of school choice; and the impact on different student populations have not been adequately accounted for in this body of research.

[7] Individual tests were based on separate samples (e.g., 3rd grade, 6th grade, reading, math, etc.). Because many of the same students took multiple tests (e.g., reading, math), we cannot assume independence of data points.
[8] Because each study was not weighted by its sample size the results should be viewed as suggestive of achievement trends.

Table 5. Summary of vote-count of positive and negative findings from studies of year-round schooling effects on achievement.

Effect of Year-Round	Reading	Math	Language & Writing	Science	Composite	Total
Positive	11	9	5	1	1	27
Negative	2	2	2	0	0	6
Level of significance	.015	.035	ns	--	--	.005

Note: All results are based on tests of statistical significance. There were 42 test effects that revealed no effect or pattern. Studies were published from 1980 to 1997.

Interviews with administrators of year-round schools in Minnesota revealed that most sites are not systematically collecting achievement data for the purposes of drawing conclusions about the effect of a year-round calendar. Rutherford Elementary, Tri-District Elementary, and School of Extended Learning are, however, involved in evaluations in which achievement data are being collected.

3.2.2 Student Attitudes Toward School and Learning

A common perception is that the attitudes of students on year-round calendars may improve as a result of more frequent breaks from school. This review showed mixed findings. The only study that surveyed students regarding their attitudes toward year-round education both before and after implementation found that after one year of experiencing a 60/15 calendar, students felt more positively about year-round education. Three other studies compared students' attitudes toward school for those on year-round and traditional schedules. While one study found no difference, the other two reported significant differences in favor of year-round education in at least a subsample of the student population (e.g., fifth-grade girls showed significant differences; boys did not).

When interviewed, administrators at Minnesota's year-round schools overwhelmingly reported that students feel positively about the calendar. Student surveys were cited as having shown high levels of satisfaction. Again, it is important to remember that all Minnesota programs are currently voluntary.

3.2.3 Student Attendance

Improved student attendance is another perceived benefit of year-round education. Again, the 1998 review showed mixed results in this area. Twelve of the studies reviewed examined student attendance in year-round programs. These studies examined absenteeism primarily for programs operating on a 60/20, 60/15, or 45/15 schedule and at the elementary and secondary school levels. Comparisons were made over time and between year-round and traditional or district attendance levels. Of the five studies that tested for statistical significance, only one reported that students in year-round schools had significantly better attendance than students in the rest of the district. When non-significant differences were reported, they ranged from a two-

day increase in attendance to a two-day decrease. These results were severely limited by sampling bias (e.g., higher proportions of at-risk students were enrolled in the year-round school) and lack of reporting of tests of significance.

None of the administrators interviewed by telephone had actual data to report on student attendance. However, two principals did note that getting students to attend in the summer was somewhat of a challenge in the early years of their calendar.

3.2.4 Dropout Rate

Another perceived benefit of year-round education is that it decreases student dropout rates because there are more opportunities for remediation and more re-entry points. However, there is very little data to back up this hypothesis. One study reported that the high school dropout rate decreased from 5% (while on a traditional calendar) to 2% (after adopting a Concept-6 schedule).[9]

3.2.5 Student Behavior

Because students have more frequent breaks from school, it has been suggested that year-round calendars allow for "cooling-off" periods that may result in fewer discipline problems. Again, there is little empirical data to back up this claim. However, there have been findings that student suspensions decreased by 30% in year-round schools compared to the rate of pupil suspensions at traditional schools[10] and that the number of discipline referrals was lower for year-round than traditional students.[11]

Representatives from Longfellow School in Rochester also reported to the Working Group a drop in the number of in-school suspensions for fighting following the adoption of the 45/15 calendar. Twenty-two suspensions were reported for the 1994-95 school year, which dropped to four during the 1995-96 school year (the first year of implementation) and then to zero the following school year.

One principal interviewed indicated that at that school, students with behavior issues are encouraged to participate in intersessions. During this time teachers are better able to build relationships with students, partly due to the smaller class sizes during intersessions. This administrator has observed that these relationships lead to improvements in behavior, which in turn seem to carry over into the regular school session.

[9] W. White, "Educational Benefits in Year-Round High Schools" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Year-Round Education. Las Vegas, NV, February 1993) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 359 660.

[10] Oxnard School District, "What YRE Can Do to Enhance Academic Achievement and to Enrich the Lives of Students That the Traditional Calendar Cannot Do" (Oxnard, CA: Oxnard School District, 1992) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 223.

[11] C. Loyd, "Impact of Year-Round Education on Retention of Learning and Other Aspects of the School Experience (Ph.D. diss., Texas A & M University, 1991), abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 52:3514.

3.2.6 Impact on Specific Student Populations

When considering benefits to students from the adoption of alternative calendars, it is useful to think about the impact on particular subgroups of students—including students with disabilities, educationally "at risk" students, and the children of migrant workers. Little research to date allows for firm conclusions, however, about the impact on different groups of students.

At-Risk Students. While much of the research on the relationship between year-round education and student achievement includes populations of at-risk students, few studies have examined the direct effect on these students or compared of the performance of high- and low-ability students. While some studies have suggested that year-round education can have greater benefits for at-risk students, in failing to determine the effects of the *added* instructional time (e.g., interesessions and other extended learning programs) which often accompanies an alternative calendar, the research is unclear whether such benefits are due to the calendar or the additional time for learning.[12]

Students with Disabilities. In considering the impact of year-round education on students with disabilities (Legislative Issue #2), the Working Group heard from special education administrators and family advocates. The presenters suggested that a school calendar offering more regular breaks of three- to four-weeks might help to minimize skill regression for students with disabilities (just as shorter and more frequent breaks are thought to assist all students in retention of learning). It was also suggested that the implementation of such calendars might eliminate the need for related support services during summer months such as those offered through the Extended School Year services.

Only a small percentage of students with disabilities receive services during the summer. These students receive the minimum service necessary to maintain their current levels of basic life skills over the summer months, not to progress. During the 1997-98 fiscal year, 26,423 special education students (duplicated count) received Extended School Year services at a cost to the state of more than $10 million.[13] Parents of children with disabilities who are not currently eligible for Extended School Year services often have difficulty finding summer enrichment programs open to their children or opportunities for the kind of socialization they get when in school.

Two criteria for determining eligibility for Extended School Year services are expected regression and recoupment time. Regression is a decline in knowledge and skills that can result from an interruption in education, while recoupment refers to the amount of time it takes to regain the prior level of functioning.[14] It is widely believed that extended school breaks, such as summer vacation, cause regression in all children, and children with disabilities are certainly no

[12] C. Kneese. "Review of Research on Student Learning in Year-Round Education."

[13] For the 1997-98 regular school year, the duplicated count of children served by special education teachers was 168,768, with expenditures totaling $570,204,000. Special education students are reported under the service provider's caseload, with each student generating $47 in state special education aid for supplies and equipment. For the year ending December 1, 1997, the *unduplicated* child count of students receiving special education services in public or private schools was 106,898 (11.5% of the total enrollment of 933,439).

[14] E. Ahearn, "Extended School Year: A Brief Analysis of State Regulations and Policies. Final Report" (1996) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 262.

exception to this phenomenon. One extensive review of the literature that examined studies of both children both and without disabilities concluded that regression and recoupment: 1) vary across skills, people, and circumstances; and 2) are likely to be a more serious problem for children with disabilities, although some studies have found that there may be little or no difference between these two groups of children.[15] It has been suggested that one way of minimizing regression among students with mild disabilities (who do not qualify for ESY) is to alter the school calendar.[16]

Presenters also suggested that a year-round calendar might be particularly good for students with emotional or behavioral disorders, given their particular needs for structure. On the other hand, questions were raised about whether a year-round calendar would be viewed favorably by teachers in EBD programs who are already in short supply.

Children of Migrant Workers. Children in migrant families might also be a population, which could be expected to benefit from adoption of a year-round calendar by Minnesota schools.[17] In Rochester, for example, Longfellow Elementary found that their August 1 school start date offered children in migrant families an additional four weeks of schooling while in Minnesota. Moving to a year-round calendar necessitates enhanced communication with all parents; including migrant families in these discussions will need to be intentional.

English Language Learners and Gifted and Talented. No presentations were made on the potential impact of a year-round calendar on English Language Learners or Gifted and Talented students. However, further research should include study of this topic given the potential of intersessions for enrichment, language instruction, and other academic programming.

While Minnesota year-round administrators were not questioned specifically about special groups of students, one respondent did volunteer the belief that this type of calendar is ideal for English Language Learners, for whom it is especially important to stay connected to school and to have continuous learning.

3.2.7 Teacher Attitudes

YRE advocates claim that teachers' attitudes will improve with more frequent vacations, just as do those of students. The teacher attitudes that have typically been measured include views on year-round education, school quality, scheduling of personal activities, and morale. What became clear in this review is that the more teachers experience year-round education, the more they like it. One study comparing the year-round to a traditional calendar found that the teachers who were most accepting and positive towards the year-round schedule had the most exposure to it, while staff on traditional calendars had the most negative attitudes about it. Other studies

[15] Macy Research Associates, "Extended School Year Programs for Handicapped Children: Literature Review Report" (1998) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 347 702.
[16] C. Ballinger, "Rethinking the School Calendar (1988), cited in R. Allinder and D. Eicher, "Bouncing Back: Regression and Recoupment Among Students with Mild Disabilities Following Summer Break," *Special Services in the Schools* 8 (2):129-42 (1994).
[17] During the 1997-98 school year, Minnesota schools served 1787 children of migrant workers in grades K-12; during the summer of 1998, 14 summer centers served 139 students in grades K-12 and 82 students ages 0-5.

have shown that teachers on year-round calendars report less stress and greater ease of scheduling personal and family activities than teachers on traditional calendars.

As is shown in Table 4 on page 14, most of the year-round schools in Minnesota opened with their current calendars in place, so teachers accepting positions in those schools were, in effect, showing their support for such schedules. However, in schools where a traditional calendar had been used prior to the change to a year-round calendar, it was reported during the interviews that only one or two teachers had opted to transfer out of those buildings. Overall, administrators described staff as "extremely positive," "energetic," and "refreshed," attributing this to the more frequent breaks afforded by their year-round calendars.

3.2.8 Teacher Absenteeism

It is also believed that year-round education may lead to reduced teacher absenteeism because of the more frequent vacations, at least in single-track schools in which teachers do not work during intersessions. The 1998 review indicated that several studies have indeed shown a decrease in teacher absenteeism, although these differences tend not to be statistically significant. Five of the six studies cited in that review did provide some evidence of a decrease in teacher absenteeism in the year-round schools, ranging from one to three days.

Working Group members who serve as administrators pointed out that even a two-day average decrease in teacher absenteeism could have real educational and financial impacts for schools, in terms of continuity for students and the costs of hiring substitute teachers. They also suggested that the combined impact of reduced absenteeism on the part of teachers and students might be expected to significantly increase the number of days of instruction to which a student is exposed over the course of 13 years in a district.

Again, administrators of Minnesota year-round schools had collected no data on this topic. However, two interviewees did assert their belief that teacher attendance is "better" with the year-round calendar, while a third characterized it as "excellent."

3.3 Fiscal and Enrollment Outcomes

3.3.1 Managing Enrollment within Existing Facilities

In addition to the desire to improve education outcomes, some districts move to multi-track year-round calendars to manage enrollment growth within existing facilities. Reducing class size without building additional buildings is another possibility on a multi-track schedule. Both of these strategies are explored in greater detail below.

In thinking about the cost implications of moving to a year-round calendar to manage enrollment, it can be useful to distinguish among capital expenses, operating expenses, and transition expenses (such as air conditioning installation, communication with parents and community members during the planning process, staff development and curriculum planning time, and the mobile storage cabinets which are often used in schools on a multi-track calendar).

In adopting a multi-track calendar to manage enrollment, districts are generally seeking to reduce the capital outlay for new buildings. In some cases, the multi-track calendar is used to delay rather than avoid building construction.

Managing rapid enrollment growth without adding buildings**.** Some districts facing rapid enrollment growth have chosen to adopt a multi-track, year-round calendar to reduce the number of new buildings that need to be constructed and equipped. Depending on the multi-track calendar selected, a building's capacity can be increased from between 25% to 50%. The most common multi-track calendars (45/15 and 60/20) increase capacity by up to 25% and 33% respectively.[18] Avoidance of capital expenditures can also have a positive impact on the credit rating of growing school districts and reduce the interest rate they pay on bond issues.[19]

For example, the Socorro Independent School District in El Paso County, Texas began phasing in year-round education in the 1991-92 school year. Student enrollment had begun to rise by 8 to 10 percent annually in the late 1980's and then accelerated to 18 to 20 percent a year. In 1998, all of the district's 21,000 students attended schools on single- or multi-track calendars. The district is serving 2000 more students than its 22 buildings could accommodate with a traditional schedule and has constructed three fewer buildings than it otherwise would have.[20]

Districts, which select a multi-track calendar to relieve overcrowding without increasing bonded indebtedness, do incur one-time transition costs. These transition costs, however, are more than offset by avoided expense for new facilities.[21]

Reducing class size. In addition to allowing districts to avoid capital expenditures when coping with enrollment growth, a multi-track configuration might also be used to reduce class size in an attempt to improve student achievement.[22] Research on the impact of lowered class size on student achievement has produced mixed results and is reviewed briefly below.

In the late 1970's, a meta-analysis conducted on class size and achievement reported results that were widely published, although later proved to be controversial.[23] This report contended that achievement significantly improved in classes with fewer than 15 students, although a subsequent study conducted by the Educational Research Services (ERS) claimed that achievement gains resulted in classes with fewer than 22 students.[24] In another review of 112 studies, it was found that only 23 demonstrated statistically significant relationships between class size and student achievement, some of which were positive and some negative.[25]

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[18] Socorro Independent School District, "Year-Round Education: The 21st Century Calendar."
[19] Standard and Poor's, "Year-Round Education's Impact on School Districts," *Credit Week Municipal* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994).
[20] Policy Studies Associates, *Extending Learning Time for Disadvantaged Students: An Idea Book* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1995) as cited in Socorro Independent School District, "Year-Round Education: The 21st Century Calendar."
[21] J. Denton and B. Walmenta, "Cost Analyses of Year-Round Schools: Variables and Algorithms" (unpublished paper, Texas A&M University, 1993).
[22] D. Illig, *Reducing Class Size: A Review of the Literature and Options for Consideration* (Sacramento, CA: California Research Bureau, 1997) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 407 699.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] K. Akerhielm, "Does Class Size Matter?" *Economics of Education Review* 14 (3): 229-4 (1995).

Some studies of lowered class sizes have found very positive results, however. A longitudinal study of Project STAR, conducted in Tennessee from 1985-1989, found, among other things, that children in small dasses consistently out-performed children in large classes across all locations (urban, rural, suburban, and inner-city) and at all grade levels (K-3).[26] Other positive outcomes related to small class size have also been reported. A study on the impact of smaller class sizes in Nevada found that students are less likely to be referred to special education, teachers experience higher morale and less stress, and teachers are able to move through the curriculum at a faster pace.[27] Results from North Carolina indicate that smaller class sizes have led to a more varied and active instructional program, fewer discipline problems, enhanced instruction and assessment, enhanced student self-concept, and improved student relationships with peers.[28]

In Minnesota, Centerville Elementary School in Anoka County is currently using a $600,000 grant from the Legislature to reduce class size to 15 students in two classrooms each in first through fifth grades. The performance of the students in those classes are being compared with control group students in classrooms with 27 or 28 students; research will also examine what happens to attitudes and parental involvement when student-teacher ratios are reduced.

3.3.2 Other Fiscal Issues

Determining the impact of YRE on a school or district's finances depends on understanding many aspects of the local context. Expenses associated with YRE programs are influenced directly by calendar selection, the size of the school, class size, transportation needs, the provision of intersession programming, teacher and staff contract provisions, and the need for facility enhancements (air-conditioning). While generalizations are difficult, the following conclusions can be drawn from existing research:

- Single-track programs are likely to cost as much or more than schools operating under a traditional schedule[29]
- Expenses associated with teacher absences and student absenteeism may be somewhat reduced in YRE programs[30]
- The use of intersessions in YRE programs for student remediation or enrichment will increase total and per pupil operating costs[31]

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[26] C. Achilles et al., "Creating Successful Schools for All Children: A Proven Step," *Journal of School Leadership* 3 (6): 606-21 (1993).
[27] D. Illig, "*Reducing Class Size: A Review of the Literature*."
[28] P. Egelson, P. Harman, and C. Achilles, *Does Class Size Make a Difference? Recent Findings from State and District Initiatives* (1996) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 398 644.
[29] Worthen and Zsiray, *What Twenty Years of Educational Studies Reveal About Year-Round Education*; Denton and Walmenta, "Cost Analyses of Year-Round Schools;" J. Bradford, "Year-Around Education: Impact on Support Services, Transportation Operations, Facilities and Maintenance" (paper presented to the Association of School Business Officials of Maryland and Washington, DC in Arnold, MD, January 1995).
[30] N. Brekke, "Year-Around Education: Cost Saving and Educationally Effective," *ERS Spectrum* (Arlington, VA: ERS, 1994); N. Brekke, "Year-Round Education: Does It Cost More?" (Oxnard, CA: Oxnard School District, 1997) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 272 974; Ballinger, "Prisoners No More."
[31] K. Sheane et al., *Year-Round Education: Breaking the Bonds of Tradition* (Tempe, AZ: Morrison Institute for Public Policy, Arizona State University, 1994) ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 375 518.

- Expenses in response to school vandalism and burglary are reduced in YRE schools[32]
- School districts save money by converting to multi-track YRE programs, but the State may incur either additional expense or a savings, depending on how state aid is calculated and the incentives a state offers districts to adopt year-round calendars[33]

Formal research has suggested that the ongoing per pupil operating expense for multi-track YRE schools is about the same as for traditional programs but depends heavily on local conditions.[34] However, some districts, which have implemented YRE, have reported a decrease in operational costs per pupil. The San Diego City Schools, for example, have found that operational costs per pupil reach a break even point when a school's enrollment is increased by 20% of the school's traditional-year capacity. Students housed beyond the 20% break-even point generated an $8.92 decrease in per pupil costs. Socorro Independent School District in El Paso, Texas found a similar savings in per pupil operating expenses after exceeding a 20% enrollment increase.[35]

Finally, it is important to note that existing research is inconclusive on the relative cost-effectiveness of employing year-round calendars as a means of improving student achievement compared with adding instructional time, reducing class size, or adopting other curricular or structural reforms.

3.3.3 Increased Utilization of Buildings and Facilities

Some alternative school calendars may make better use of existing school buildings and facilities (Legislative Issue #1). The ones that do so are either designed to serve more students (e.g., year-round, multi-track programs) or to add instructional time (e.g., intersessions, extended day, week, or year programs, longer school days, or longer school years). Simply reallocating the existing time for instruction will not increase building utilization. However, the addition of such programming does raise operational costs.

[32] Ballinger, "Prisoners No More;" Brekke, "Year-Round Education: Cost Saving and Educationally Effective;" Brekke, *Year-Round Education: Does It Cost More?*

[33] D. Hough et al., "Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Year-Round Education Programs" (paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA in April 1990).

[34] Worthen and Zsiray, *What Twenty Years of Educational Studies Reveal About Year-Round Education*; Denton and Walmenta, "Cost Analyses of Year-Round Schools;" Brekke, "Year-Round Education: Cost Saving and Educationally Effective;" Brekke, *Year-Round Education: Does It Cost More?*

[35] Socorro Independent School District, "Year-Round Education: The 21st Century Calendar."

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING YEAR-ROUND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA

The adoption of year-round educational programs can vary considerably based on factors that influence the need for such programs and determine its characteristics. A discussion of the issues that arise during the implementation of alternative school year calendars must, at a minimum, take into consideration differences that occur under the following conditions:

- Location: urban, suburban, or rural
- Local economy: importance of tourism or agriculture
- District enrollment patterns: increasing, decreasing, or stable
- Nature of the program: voluntary or mandatory, single- or multi-track
- Scope of the program: grade levels; whole district, selected sites, or school-within-a-school

For example, certain issues only arise when considering a multi-track calendar such as the need for mobile storage or the challenge of scheduling all-school staff development sessions. Others, including transportation costs and the implications for collective bargaining, are likely to arise on either type of calendar. And, when entire districts move to a year-round schedule, they may effectively remove options for staff, students, and their families. If participation is voluntary or different choices of calendars exist, the potential impact of some issues is lessened.

This section discusses key issues that may arise in the process of adopting a year-round school calendar and highlights the experiences of several Minnesota programs, all of which involve voluntary, single-track calendars (see Section 2.2.4). A more comprehensive list of questions that can arise during implementation of year-round calendars may be found in Appendix D. The implementation and planning issues identified as most important by the Working Group are further discussed in Section 5 under "Key Findings."

4.1 EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

The Working Group paid particular attention to what, if any, barriers exist in Minnesota statutes or policies that might make it difficult for districts to explore and eventually adopt alternative school calendars (Legislative Issue #8). Representatives from the Minnesota schools that were interviewed as part of this process did not identify any state-level standards or requirements as significantly impeding their efforts to adopt an alternative calendar. Several potential challenges, however, were initially raised and examined by the Working Group.

4.1.1 State Board Approval for Start Date

Schools, other than Area Learning Centers, that wish to institute a calendar with a start date before September 1 currently need approval at the state level, either from the Commissioner or the State Board of Education depending on the type of program.

Some members of the Working Group questioned the need for state approval when the calendar merely reallocates the traditional number of instructional days and does not generate additional state revenues, unlike schools applying for Learning Year funding.

4.1.2 Achievement Testing

State-mandated achievement testing poses two potential challenges for schools on alternative calendars. First, will their students be in school on the state-selected testing dates, or will they need to secure a waiver to conduct testing at a different time? Second, what happens to the comparability of test results across schools and districts if *all* students enrolled in a school with an alternative calendar have received more or fewer days of instruction than the majority of students on a traditional calendar because of *when* the tests are scheduled?

Minnesota schools on alternative calendars have encountered few major challenges in these areas because they consciously build their schedules to accommodate the dates the state has set for achievement testing. In these instances, changes in the published testing schedule are more likely to pose a problem.

4.1.3 Attendance and Apportionments of State Aid

Because Minnesota schools receive their state aid based on Average Daily Membership rather than Average Daily Attendance, any impact an alternative calendar may have, positively or negatively, on student attendance has no implications for the amount of state aid received by a district (Legislative Issue #9).

Some year-round schools financed the cost of transition to a new calendar with grant funds established by the 1995-96 and 1997-98 Legislatures for extended day, week, year and year-round pilot programming. In addition, the Learning Year program allows schools receiving approval to access additional funds when they add time to the school year. Four charter schools and six school districts have currently received approval from the State Board of Education for Learning Year funding.

4.1.4 Licensure Issues

Year-round schools are likely to encounter few issues that are directly related to licensure as opposed to contracting and collective bargaining (see Section 4.2). Year-round schools offering intersession programming do need to determine which offerings require licensed teachers and which can be staffed by community education personnel or volunteers.

Interviews with administrators in Minnesota's year-round schools made it clear that the nature of intersession programming varies considerably. Some programs are offered through community education while other are taught by licensed teachers (i.e., either regular staff or substitute teachers) who volunteer to work during these times and are typically paid on an hourly basis. A licensing issue may arise when alternative calendars serve relatively small populations of students (e.g., school-within-a-school option or a cyber-academy). This configuration can raise licensing issues, particularly when the program is small and serves both elementary and secondary students (e.g., K-8 schools) or middle and high school students (e.g., 7-12 schools). In this instance, the lower enrollment means fewer teachers are hired to teach all grade levels and thus may need multiple licenses (e.g., elementary and secondary) to teach across levels.

4.2 STAFFING

4.2.1 Labor Relations Issues

Existing Minnesota statute (124D.124) directs districts considering an alternative calendar in any facility to negotiate with the teachers, principals, assistant principals, supervisory personnel, and employees to the extent required by the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (Legislative Issues #4 and #7). The existing statute also assures teachers' continuing contract rights for positions held the year prior to implementation of a Flexible Learning Year program (124D.125). Likewise, teaching experience earned during probationary periods the year prior cannot be lost or impaired by the district's adoption of such a program.

The Working Group considered a range of contractual issues related to alternative calendars, many of which might become topics for negotiation:

- calculation of seniority for teachers in schools with alternative calendars that begin early (e.g., in July or August),
- timing of notification about lay-offs or non-renewal of contract,
- choice of track in a multi-track system, and
- rate of pay for teachers choosing to teach during intersessions or extended day programs.

During the interviews, Minnesota administrators were asked directly whether labor relations issues had posed significant challenges for them. All said no, explaining that they had worked closely with the teachers' union, which one principal described as being "real supportive." In terms of payment for staff working additional time (e.g., during intersessions), respondents noted these staff are paid an hourly rate similar to the rate paid to teachers on a traditional calendar who teach summer school.

4.2.2 Assignment of School Staff among Facilities

Existing statute (124D.125) requires that districts considering the Flexible Learning Year follow certain procedures when implementation will not be district-wide. School boards must make every reasonable effort to assign qualified teachers who prefer to remain on a traditional schedule to such facilities and at the same grade level (Legislative Issue #6). Districts also need full-time teachers' written consent before assigning them to teach in a substantially different

period of the calendar or for more or fewer days than they taught the preceding year on a traditional calendar.

It became apparent from interviews with Minnesota year-round administrators that the assignment of staff among facilities has, at this point, adversely affected only a few teachers. Most of the year-round schools in Minnesota *began* as year-round programs; therefore, their teachers accepted the calendar with the position. In schools, which made the transition from a traditional to a year-round schedule, only one or two teachers chose to transfer to a different building in each case.

4.2.3 Opportunities for Teachers' Professional and Staff Development.

One perceived disadvantage of year-round education is that teachers may have a more difficult time scheduling professional development. The professional development courses needed for teachers to acquire additional licenses or change lanes are often offered during the summer when year-round schools may still be in session. This area, like many others, requires additional attention, as the research findings are quite limited.

Only two studies in review presented to the Working Group addressed the topic of professional development for teachers. One compared traditional calendar teachers to those on a 60/20 year-round schedule and found no significant difference between the two groups regarding ease of attending professional meetings, staff development activities, or college courses. The other study found that after two years of being on a year-round schedule, roughly half of the teachers noted that participation in these types of activities was more difficult than it had been on a traditional calendar.

While anecdotal evidence presented to the Working Group suggested that teachers in Minnesota's limited number of year-round schools have found ways around this particular challenge, interviews with administrators at these schools revealed mixed results when asked how the move to an alternative calendar had affected teachers' professional development opportunities. From these respondents' points of view, institutions of higher education are "user-friendly" and have offered creative ways for teachers in these schools to take coursework. At one school, for example, teachers working on post-graduate degrees were able to attend classes in their school building. Other interviewees indicated that staff simply arranges class around their teaching schedule, with some adding that they do offer teachers flexibility in this area. One principal reported having been interested in sending her staff to a particular class, but that this was not possible due to conflicts with their school schedule.

Attending district-wide staff development during the school year is also a potential challenge when an individual school is on an alternative calendar and the rest of the district is not. One of the year-round school administrators noted that the difference in schedules renders it impossible for teachers to be able to participate in all of the district staff development days. In schools with a multi-track system, identifying dates for department- or school-wide staff development can be especially challenging when one group of teachers is always on vacation. Some multi-track schools have been able to overcome this scheduling conflict by ensuring that all tracks share an overlapping day in order to have all staff in the building on the same day.

While raising some challenges in the area of professional development, an alternative school calendar may also open the possibility for consideration of new ways of allocating teacher planning and staff development time. For example, in a school on a single-track, 45/15 year-round calendar, for example, it might be possible for teachers to work on a 45/10/5 calendar with the final week being devoted to planning, analysis of student achievement and portfolio results, or intensive staff development.

4.2.4 Teachers' Summer Employment

Because some teachers generate significant income through non-school employment during the summer, resistance would likely be encountered if a district decided to proceed with a year-round calendar on a mandatory basis. Other opportunities for employment during school breaks exist, however, on both types of year-round calendars. For example, on multi-track schedules, teachers may generate additional income as substitutes during the periods they are off-track. Likewise, single-track programs with intersession programming offer additional employment opportunities for teachers who choose to work during these breaks.

4.2.5 Impact on Administrators

Because principals of year-round schools are required to deal with the most difficult times of the year (i.e., the beginning and end of school) every six to nine weeks, particularly on a multi-track calendar, they may experience more stress or burnout. Only one rigorous and well-designed study in the 1998 research review included empirical data on the oft-cited factor of administrative burnout, which compared 69 year-round and 70 traditional schedule elementary principals. The study found no significant differences in their emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, or sense of personal accomplishment on a standardized instrument measuring burnout.

On an anecdotal basis, Working Group members familiar with the implementation of alternative calendars suggested that principals overseeing a year-round school may deal with more potential conflict situations (discipline, transportation problems, parent concerns) over a longer period of time than their colleagues on traditional calendars. However, this would only be the case for schools operating on a multi-track calendar or those offering intersession programming or an optional summer term.

Table 4 on page 14 shows that 8 of the 11 year-round Minnesota schools do offer intersession programming. For that reason, it is not surprising that several of the principals interviewed did acknowledge an increase in their workload. However, it is important to note that when these same individuals were asked if they would like to return to a traditional calendar, all responded "no." Interestingly, one respondent explained that a retired administrator is hired to fill in during intersessions.

In contrast, administrators who do not have intersession programming at their sites did not feel their workloads had increased due to the year-round nature of their calendars. They pointed out that they are able to come in to school on breaks and catch up and that they have the opportunity to take vacations at non-traditional times.

4.3 FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

4.3.1 Selection and Readiness of Facilities

Successfully moving to a year-round calendar in most cases will require year-round climate control, generating significant capital expense in buildings without air conditioning. In fact, installing air conditioning into older buildings can be prohibitively expensive. For example, when exploring options to add air conditioning to an elementary building with 26 regular classrooms, a media center, and gymnasium, the South Washington County Schools were presented with three options:

- window units for individual classrooms to be purchased for approximately $220,000,
- a rooftop system covering four rooms at a time for a capital cost of $350,000, or
- central air conditioning estimated at more than $1 million.

The above estimates did not include air conditioning for the kitchen/cafeteria, administration offices, or small group workrooms, nor for the projected costs of operating each system (e.g., window units posed significantly higher operational costs).

For districts considering construction of new buildings, the state recommends but does not require year-round climate control.

Interview data revealed that the Minnesota schools, which were intended for year-round use, were built with air conditioning and that one school, Longfellow Elementary, added air conditioning after having been on a year-round calendar for a year.

4.3.2 Transportation

Increased transportation costs are viewed as one of the most significant barriers to the implementation of alternative calendars in Minnesota. Districts that implement a year-round calendar in fewer than all of their schools are likely to experience increased transportation costs because of nonconforming calendars. No special funds for transportation currently exist in the categorical aid available to schools on alternative school year calendars, with the exception of

those provided under interdistrict desegregation transportation funding or the additional general education revenue generated by districts adopting Learning Year programs.

According to the Minnesota Association for Public Transportation (MAPT), most transportation contracts are based upon hourly rates, which necessitates a substantial payment for going to the first school, but a sharp decrease in costs for additional schools. If, for example, an urban district paid $200 a day for a bus to serve School A and only $10 more a day for the same bus to serve School B on the same day, the total cost for this bus serving two schools on the same schedule would be $210 a day. In contrast, if the schools were on nonconforming calendars, the cost would be $200 for each school or $400 for the district.

To reduce the increased transportation costs resulting from nonconforming calendars within a district, several of the Minnesota schools have modified a 45/15 or 30/5 schedule to conform more closely to their district calendars. For example, several programs begin school in September with the rest of the district or incorporate the district's spring break into their calendars.

The Working Group heard discussion of several options to mitigate the increased transportation costs from a non-conforming calendar for year-round schools, which draw from more than one district (e.g. Tri-District), including cooperative transportation arrangements similar to that piloted by the Wide Area Transportation System (WATS). However, the group was unable to reach an agreement as to the optimal method without further examination of the issue.

For an entire district moving to a single-track schedule without increasing the number of school days, MAPT estimated that transportation costs would theoretically remain the same. However, local district factors, such as reduced availability of drivers during the summer months, might impede such a move. The potential impact of an entire district moving to a multi-track 45/15 program—without transportation for intersession programming—was also thought to differ in urban and rural areas. In urban districts, such a scenario would require fewer school buses, but more transportation days. Some costs could decrease as capital expenses (buses, insurance, driver training) are spread throughout the school year. Rural districts, on the other hand, were estimated to require the same number of routes to transport students from secluded areas. Moreover, the driver pool in rural areas may be very limited during the summer months because many drivers also work on farms.

For a district with intersession programming, the number of miles driven on each bus can be expected to rise, increasing maintenance costs and depreciation of the vehicle. In addition, the extended number of school days reduces the opportunities for carrying out regular maintenance during normal business hours and as such may lead to increased costs for overtime pay.

Another alternative calendar, the four-day school week, has the advantage of eliminating one day of transportation each week. However, the longer school day that accompanies this schedule would likely make combined school bus routes unworkable in an urban setting, resulting in the need for many additional buses.

Other transportation-related issues, which districts must consider, include the following:

- Moving to a quarterly transportation schedule may mean more frequent rerouting and notification of different routes and times.
- School buses are typically not air-conditioned.[1]
- Per state requirements, school bus safety training must be conducted within three weeks of school's starting for elementary school students and within six weeks for high school students.

The extent to which transportation was a barrier for Minnesota's year-round schools varied considerably. While it did not seem to pose a problem for some, one respondent did characterize transportation as the "biggest barrier." Some of the challenges reported by administrators included: the added expense, obtaining assistance from the district with scheduling, and the changing of both bus routes and bus drivers throughout the year.

4.3.3 Maintenance

Schools on a single-track calendar without significant intersession programming might find benefits to a year-round calendar because more frequent breaks allow facilities to be cleaned more frequently. In addition, a task like carpet cleaning, normally, but not optimally, conducted in the summer when moisture in the air increases time for drying, could be accomplished during the longer winter break. However, schools on multi-track calendars need to reconsider the timing of maintenance tasks usually delayed until the summer (e.g., floor varnishing, vent cleaning, etc.). Accomplishing these maintenance tasks may require custodial staff to work on weekends, which could increase costs for districts and/or require re-negotiation of contracts.

Schools with extended day and intersession programming may increase the challenges of accomplishing daily maintenance tasks in addition to those scheduled for the summer months. Like utility, transportation, and staffing costs, maintenance costs can also be expected to rise when a building is in service for more days during the year.

4.3.4 Transition Costs

Moving to a year-round calendar involves some one-time transition costs. Typically, these arise from the installation of air conditioning, increased communication with parents, initial training for staff, curriculum revision, and, in a multi-track system, storage cabinets in which teachers and students on vacation store their belongings when their classroom is being used by another track. States, including California and Texas, have offered funding to support transition costs as an alternative to new school construction.

4.4 STUDENTS

Students may also encounter challenges when attending schools on a year-round calendar. Potential issues include the impact on summer employment (particularly for high school

[1] Many buses in warm climate districts have roofs painted white to add some climate control without air conditioning

students), extracurricular and athletic activities, and the opportunity to take lower enrollment electives under a multi-track calendar. These concerns would seem to make it easier to implement year-round calendars in elementary schools than in high schools; some districts with multi-track elementary programs have tried to lessen these impacts on high school students by adopting a single-track calendar for their high schools.

4.4.1 Employment

Only two of the year-round programs in Minnesota enroll high school-aged students. Both are charter schools that encourage student employment by offering credit for work-related experiences. Thus, Minnesota programs have not had to face the concerns, which high school students raise about losing summer employment when moving to a year-round calendar, whether single- or multi-track. For some secondary students, income from summer jobs contributes to their postsecondary education, participation in school-sponsored travel for music or language clubs, and, in some cases, their family's income. The year-round calendar could also be problematic for students whose jobs relate to traditional summer activities: travel and tourism, summer camps, lifeguarding, and amusement parks.

4.4.2 Extracurricular Activities and Sports

The Minnesota State High School League has determined that students on a year-round calendar, including 45/15, four-quarter, and quinmester schedules, may participate in the interscholastic program during the time they are not in school, providing they meet all eligibility requirements. This does, however, put students in the position of returning to school for practice and games during times when they are "on vacation." Similarly, students on a multi-track calendar who are involved in extracurricular activities including music, journalism, or drama are also likely to find themselves at school during their "vacations" if they wish to participate in these activities.

4.4.3 Allocating Students among Facilities and Tracks

High school students, in particular, may have concerns about having friends who attend schools on a different calendar or, in a multi-track system, being assigned to tracks different than their friends (Legislative Issue #3).

4.5 FAMILIES

The impact of an alternative calendar on family lifestyles, traditions, and economics can generate significant discussion and sometimes controversy within a community. When investigating alternative calendars, some districts find that strongly held values among parents about the appropriate length of summer vacation are often the key factor in defeating a proposal for a year-round calendar. This section highlights some of the other concerns for parents.

Given the potential to significantly affect family life, it is critical that parents be involved in the decision-making process (Legislative Issue #5) and that districts be clear about the financial and/or educational reasons for the proposed change in calendar.

4.5.1 Child Care

An alternative calendar requires many parents to reconsider how they arrange for childcare. At Longfellow Elementary in Rochester, for example, the school developed intersession programming to assist families with their child care needs during the three-week breaks, but its cost meant it was not a viable solution for all parents. For families that rely on older siblings to babysit for younger siblings, alternative arrangements may also have to be made if the students are in schools on different calendars.

When asked if families had experienced any challenges with the year-round calendar, administrators at some of Minnesota's year-round schools indicated that some parents are indeed reluctant to have their children on different school calendars in part because of the need to have older children caring for their younger siblings. It was also noted that the need for sibling-care was one reason parents at two year-round elementary schools advocated for the development of a year-round middle school, which opened in the fall of 1998.

4.5.2 Allocating Students among Facilities and Tracks

Existing statute (124D.123) directs districts implementing a multi-track program to place students of the same family in the same group unless one or more of these students is enrolled in a special education class or unless the parent or guardian wants students on different tracks (Legislative Issue #3). Some parents with children on a multi-track schedule have preferred having children on different tracks in order to spend additional quality time with individual children. Clearly, keeping students within a family on the same track and accommodating parent preferences about tracks becomes part of the complicated scheduling challenge of mandatory, multi-track programs.

In Minnesota, some single-track, year-round schools have voluntarily instituted a policy of sibling-preference. This ensures that the applications of brothers and sisters of currently enrolled students are given higher priority than other new students in an attempt to keep families on the same calendar.

4.5.3 Vacations

Although many year-round calendars attempt to schedule at least some time off during the summer months, some do not, and thus families may need to change their traditional vacation plans. However, some families find their cost of travel reduced because vacations can be scheduled during times when few others travel. In addition, parents who work jobs with a summer seasonal intensity may also appreciate the opportunity to schedule vacations at other times during the year.

Most districts seeking to implement an alternative calendar have encountered opposition from parents because of summer vacations. Vocal opposition from a minority of parents has derailed plans for instituting a year-round calendar, even voluntarily, in some Minnesota school districts.

Administrators of Minnesota year-round schools did not see this issue as causing any difficulties now, although it is important to keep in mind that the year-round calendar is currently a choice for families at all of the schools interviewed. At two of the schools, arrangements have been made to turn family vacations into for-credit projects, while another one sends work along with students who take vacations when school is in session.

4.6 BUSINESSES

Nationally, the members of the business community—particularly those in the tourism or amusement park industry—have expressed serious opposition to year-round calendars, expressing concern both about the impacts on sales and their employee base. While supporting quality education for the students who are their future and, in some cases, present employees, business leaders have expressed doubts about whether altering the calendar or adding instructional days is the best way to address concerns about student achievement. For businesses, concerns about the year-round calendar are added to concerns about the "shrinking of summer" which occurs with other restructuring efforts, including extended school years and pre-Labor Day start dates.

Despite their concerns, neither the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Minnesota Business Partnership, nor Hospitality Minnesota has a formal position on alternative school calendars. However, Hospitality Minnesota and local chambers of commerce have opposed the pre-Labor Day school start that would be likely even with a single-track calendar—citing decreased sales and a shortage of student employees. In the fall of 1998, for example, the Brainerd and Detroit Lakes Chambers of Commerce surveyed their members on the impact of a pre-Labor Day start. Of those responding, at least 60% in each city reported a significant or moderate decrease in business sales with a pre-Labor Day start date compared to previous years when area schools started after Labor Day. Similarly, at least 40% of respondents in each area reported a moderate or significant shortage of high school student employees in the year the pre-Labor Day school start was instituted. In discussing these results, it was suggested that under conditions other than the full employment currently prevailing in Minnesota, year-round calendars might cause businesses to turn to non-student workers, thereby depriving students of work experience.

The Minnesota State Fair has also expressed concerns about the effect of the pre-Labor Day school start on general attendance and their workforce. During 1998**,** when the pre-Labor Day start was instituted, the State Fair processed employment registrations for 3,100 individuals. Of these, less than 10% (304) were from 14 to 17-year-olds who said they were unable to work all 12 days of the Fair, most because school would be in session. While overall attendance at the 1998 State Fair exceeded that of previous years, attendance on four of the five weekdays preceding Labor Day decreased when compared to the average of the previous five years on those days.

Significant Working Group discussion centered on the possible impact on the tourism industry if a *significant* number of districts adopted a year-round calendar. While resorts that are already year-round might benefit from having families spread their vacations throughout the year, those only open during the summer months would likely see a dramatic changes in their level of business and/or their clientele (e.g., fewer families).

In most cases, the business community supports local control over decisions. However, the tourism industry sees the adoption of alternative calendars as a case in which state involvement may be important because the decisions made by local school boards will affect the tourism industry as a whole and state tax receipts. Members of the business community have also asked whether other options besides the adoption of an alternative calendar could be used to improve student achievement and allow for more time on task during the school year (e.g. lengthening school days, eliminating some existing breaks during school year, etc.).

4.7 COMMUNITIES

When a significant number of schools adopt a year-round calendar within a geographic area, community organizations may also need to consider changes in their schedule of offerings. Affected organizations could include: day care providers; youth development organizations such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs; church camps and Bible schools; and summer camps (language, athletics, etc.). School districts with many students who are active in community-based organizations will want to work with these groups and involve them in the process early. In Oxnard, California, which initiated year-round education in 1976, a year-round vacation program has been an integral part of the district's overall plan. The district was able to work with the city's recreation department, Boys and Girls Clubs, and the YMCA and YWCA to provide year-round, out-of-school activities for children.[2]

In Minnesota, year-round calendars exist mainly in individual schools rather than being district-wide, so the impact on communities has been minimal. Still, the principal of one year-round school explained that they work with a local YMCA to plan activities for students who choose not to attend intersessions.

4.8 PROCESS OF CHANGE

Based on the telephone interviews with Minnesota schools operating on a year-round calendar, it was clear that parents or an individual staff member, administrator, or school board member were usually instrumental in the initial push to examine alternative calendars. Extensive further involvement of staff and parents was key in the process, most notably for schools that moved from a traditional to a year-round calendar. While one respondent acknowledged that parents had not been involved in the decision-making process, this was the exception to the norm, with others reporting that parents had been involved "totally and completely" and "right from the beginning."

Several administrators spoke of steering committees, task forces, or planning retreats. In addition, many had utilized parent surveys in order to gauge parents' interest in year-round schooling, learn why parents would or would not send their children to a year-round school, and determine which specific type of year-round calendar parents would prefer. One principal explained that a group of 12 to 15 families was instrumental in getting information out to other

[2] Maine State Department of Education, *Rethinking the School Calendar*.

families through telephone calls. Their efforts resulted in 73% of parents' agreeing that they would send their children to a year-round school.

The literature review and experiences of schools in Minnesota—both those that have implemented year-round calendars and those, which have considered and rejected an alternative calendar—suggest the following general guidelines for implementation:

- **Involve key players.** Involve a variety of stakeholders early on in both the information-gathering and decision-making processes and have them speak with parents, teachers, and administrators who are currently working in year-round schools.
- **Start anew or convert?** Consider the advantages of instituting an alternate calendar as a brand new school or program. If converting from a traditional to a year-round calendar, be sure to get staff on board before proposing a plan to the community.
- **Offer plenty of chances for discussion.** Provide opportunities for small group meetings in which people can raise concerns and get answers to their questions.
- **Have a clear understanding of the context.** Be clear about the reasons you want to adopt an alternative calendar, the advantages and disadvantages of the calendar, and how this effort fits into the larger improvement agenda of the district.
- **Understand the curricular impact.** Consider the curricular revisions and staff development necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities of a year-round calendar.
- **Be prepared for opposition.** Know that research can and will be marshaled to support the positions of those on all sides of the year-round debate; a small, but vocal, minority of opponents can prevent implementation
- **Seek out funding.** Identify funding sources for transitional costs and operational costs such as intersession programming.

Also be advised that the level of community and staff opposition is likely to be much higher when the proposed model has any of the following characteristics:

- the plan is mandatory rather than voluntary,
- the plan is voluntary, but families and staff have few other options within the district,
- a multi-track calendar is being considered, and
- high school(s) are included.

SECTION 5
KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarizes the key findings and recommendations emerging from the Alternative Calendar Working Group's deliberations on alternatives to the traditional school calendar.

5.1 KEY FINDINGS

Finding #1: The most popular alternative to the traditional school year calendar is the year-round calendar. Over 2 million students are enrolled in more than 2,900 year-round schools in 39 states, a five-fold increase in the last decade.

Although other options exist (e.g., four-day weeks and extended year programs), year-round calendars are the most common alternative to the traditional, nine-month, September through June school year. In Minnesota, the typical year-round program is adopted for academic reasons, is voluntary, and operates on a single-track schedule of 45 days on and 15 days off. Such programs are found at both the elementary and secondary school level and while most are single schools, at least two operate as a school-within-a-school.

The Minnesota experience differs somewhat from the national picture in which, as of 1998:

- 77% of all year-round programs operate at the elementary school level.
- 59% of year-round calendars are single-track, 41% multi-track.

Finding #2: In a review of 75 studies of student achievement, 36% indicated that students attending year-round schools perform better than students on traditional calendars, 8% found that students on traditional calendars performed better, and 56% showed no difference in student performance by calendar.

Research on student achievement from the past three decades indicates that students attending year-round schools will perform as well as, and in some instances, better than students attending schools on a traditional calendar. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the more frequent breaks found on year-round schedules both improve the overall school climate (e.g., improved attitudes of students and staff, fewer discipline problems) and improve student and teacher attendance, leading to positive effects on learning. The positive results seen in year-round programs may arise from the opportunities they provide for more continuous learning, more frequent remediation for students that need it, and more frequent breaks to refresh both students and staff. However, existing studies of year-round education have not adequately accounted for important factors such as structural reforms that add time to the school day, week, or year; innovations in curriculum and instruction; and school choice.

The Working Group determined that *no one alternative calendar* currently stands out as being better than the others in allowing districts to best meet the education needs of their students. The effectiveness of alternative school calendars appears to be *context-specific*, depending on the population of students being served, the type of calendar selected, the presence of other educational reforms, and characteristics and needs of the local community.

More research is needed to determine which calendars are best for which students and under what local conditions. Few studies have been conducted in such a way as to differentiate among the overall effectiveness and impact of the various different models of year-round education. And, while some configurations are more common than others (e.g., 45/15, 45/10, 60/15, 60/20), an increasing number of schools are creating new schedules, some of which are extremely flexible and individualized to the student. Future research also needs to explore the impact of a variety of alternative calendars on different student populations (e.g., English Language Learners, students with disabilities, students in migrant families, gifted and talented, educationally at-risk).

Finding #3: Year-round, multi-track programs may be used to increase utilization of school buildings and facilities, manage rapidly increasing enrollments at a lower cost, and reduce class size within existing facilities.

Working Group investigation suggests that districts facing rapid enrollment growth, the adoption of a multi-track, year-round calendar can reduce the number of new buildings that need to be constructed and equipped. Depending on which multi-track calendar is selected, *a building's capacity can be increased from between 25% to 50%*. The most common multi-track calendars (45/15 and 60/20) increase capacity by up to 25% and 33% respectively. Districts that select a multi-track calendar to relieve overcrowding without increasing bonded indebtedness do incur one-time transition costs. These transition costs, however, are more than offset by avoided expense for new facilities.

In addition to allowing districts to avoid capital expenditures when coping with enrollment growth, a multi-track configuration might also be used to *reduce class size* without adding space and thereby improve student achievement.

Finding #4: The impact of year-round education on the finances of a school or district depends on many aspects of the local context, including calendar selection, class size, transportation needs, intersession programming, staff contract provisions, and the need for air conditioning.

In reviewing information regarding the costs associated with alternative calendars, the Working Group concluded that such costs are dependent on a number of factors, including the nature and circumstances of the implementation. The evidence suggests that some costs *may* increase under a single track, year-round calendar (e.g., transportation, air conditioning) even when no instructional time is added through intersession programming which necessarily raises both the total and per pupil operating costs. In the case of multi-track calendars, however, it is not clear

whether per pupil operating expenses would be the same or lower than those with a traditional calendar. It was also suggested that expenses associated with teacher absenteeism, student absenteeism, and vandalism might be reduced in year-round programs. In related discussions, the Working Group reached no conclusions about the relative cost-effectiveness of year-round calendars as a means of improving student achievement as compared to adding instructional time, reducing class size, or adopting other curricular or structural reforms.

Finding #5: Attitudes of parents, transportation, and transitional costs have been the major challenges for Minnesota schools adopting year-round school calendars.

Districts considering implementation of a year-round calendar will need to consider a range of implementation issues including state requirements, staffing, facilities and operations, and the impact on students, families, businesses, and community organizations. In Minnesota, the most significant challenges thus far have related too the concerns of families, transportation costs, and transition costs.

The most often-cited barrier to adoption of a year-round calendar in Minnesota was the attitudes of parents. Even when districts involved parents in the process from the beginning, the adherence to cultural traditions such as family summer vacations and concerns about having children on two different calendars and developing alternative childcare arrangements were often too strong to overcome.

For Minnesota schools that had the support of parents and staff, the increased transportation costs that arise when operating on a calendar, which does not conform to the district's calendar, and when bringing students to intersession programming were viewed as the next greatest challenge. Finally, transition costs, most notably the capital expense for installation of air conditioning in existing buildings, was also a challenge for some Minnesota schools.

Finding #6: A significant increase in the number of schools and districts operating on a year-round calendar or the consideration of multi-track schedules are anticipated to raise other implementation challenges.

To date in Minnesota, the year-round calendar has been adopted by a small number of schools, on a voluntary basis, and in the single-track format, which has minimized implementation challenges. The Working Group anticipates that he following issues would become more important should this pattern change.

Staffing. Teachers who generate income through non-school employment in the summer are likely to be concerned about a change from the traditional calendar. In addition, teachers who have traditionally used the summer to take professional development courses to acquire additional licenses or gain salary increments would need to take advantage of other options. Finally, principals on multi-track calendars or single-track schedules, which include intersession programming, will have an increased workload; avoiding administrator burnout may become a more significant issue in the future.

Students. Concerns about summer employment and participation in sports and extracurricular activities become more significant when a year-round calendar is implemented at the high school level, particularly in a multi-track format.

Businesses. Nationally, members of the business community--particularly those in the tourism or amusement park industry--have raised concern about the impacts on their sales volume and their employee base. While supporting quality education for students, business leaders have expressed doubts about whether altering the calendar or adding instructional days is the best way to improve student achievement. Minnesota business and tourism groups currently have no formal position on alternative school calendars, but some have opposed the pre-Labor Day school start that would be likely even with a single-track calendar. While resorts that are already open year-round might benefit from having families spread their vacations throughout the year, those only open during the summer months might see a significant decrease in their business should a large number of schools or districts adopt a year-round calendar.

Finding #7: Successful planning and implementation of an alternative calendar requires a well-designed process.

The literature review and experiences of schools in Minnesota—both those that have implemented year-round calendars and those, which have considered and rejected an alternative calendar—suggest the following general guidelines for implementation:

- **Involve key players.** Involve a variety of stakeholders early on in both the information-gathering and decision-making processes and have them speak with parents, teachers, and administrators who are currently working in year-round schools.
- **Start anew or convert?** Consider the advantages of instituting an alternate calendar as a brand new school or program. If converting from a traditional to a year-round calendar, be sure to get staff on board before proposing a plan to the community.
- **Offer plenty of chances for discussion.** Provide opportunities for small group meetings in which people can raise concerns and get answers to their questions.
- **Have a clear understanding of the context.** Be clear about the reasons you want to adopt an alternative calendar, the advantages and disadvantages of the calendar, and how this effort fits into the larger improvement agenda of the district.
- **Understand the curricular impact.** Consider the curricular revisions and staff development necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities of a year-round calendar.
- **Be prepared for opposition.** Know that research can and will be marshaled to support the positions of those on all sides of the year-round debate; a small, but vocal, minority of opponents can prevent implementation
- **Seek out funding.** Identify funding sources for transitional costs and operational costs such as intersession programming.

Also be advised that the level of community and staff opposition is likely to be much higher when the proposed model has any of the following characteristics: the plan is mandatory rather than voluntary, the plan is voluntary, but families and staff have few other options within the district, a multi-track calendar is being considered, and high school(s) are included.

Finding #8: More needs to be known about the planning, implementation, and impact of alternative calendars in Minnesota and the ways in which these issues change for different models and under different conditions.

Despite the continued growth of alternative school year programs in Minnesota, Working Group members were concerned that little is known about their impact on achievement or the planning and implementation processes involved. Moreover, because the Minnesota programs are voluntary, single-track programs adopted for the primary purpose of improving student achievement, little is known about the likelihood of success or failure for other models of alternative calendars and under other circumstances. For example, how does the implementation process differ when programs on a traditional calendar are converted to alternative calendars as opposed to starting a brand new program? How are students, families, area businesses and local communities affected when an entire district adopts a nontraditional calendar? What is the impact of programs that include multi-track, extended year, or four-day week components? Finally, what are the long-term educational and fiscal effects of alternative school calendars?

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of these key findings, the Alternative Calendar Working Group makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1:

The adoption of alternative school year calendars in Minnesota should be a voluntary, locally controlled choice adapted to fit the local context.

Educational research and the experiences of Minnesota schools currently operating on year-round schedules strongly suggest that educational benefits may indeed accrue from the adoption of an alternative school calendar. This Working Group thus recommends that the adoption of alternative school calendars be supported as a choice at the local level to acknowledge the fact that circumstances of school districts throughout the state can vary greatly. Within a given context, both the reasons for adopting an alternative calendar and the potential barriers to be faced will differ. For example, variation may occur because of the location (e.g., urban vs. rural); economics (e.g., importance of tourism or agriculture to the local economy); nature and scope of implementation (e.g., voluntary or mandatory; whole district, single- or multiple-building, school-within-a-school), or enrollment patterns (e.g., increasing, steady, or decreasing).

In discussing the need to support choice for alternative calendars at the local level, the Working Group also questioned the necessity of the current requirement that schools adopting such calendars apply for state board approval under the Flexible Learning Year program.

Recommendation #2:

> **To facilitate informed choices about alternative school year calendars, the Department of Children, Families & Learning should make existing research and other information to guide planning and implementation readily available to local school districts.**

Districts contemplating the adoption of an alternative calendar typically convene special task forces or working groups to collect and evaluate relevant information. These groups would benefit greatly from centralized access to a clearinghouse that provides: the latest research on the impact of different school calendars, planning and implementation guides, descriptions of and contact information for schools operating on alternative calendars, summaries of "best practices" models, and links to other resources and assistance available from the state.

Recommendation #3:

> **Minnesota should expand its current Extended Day and Year-Round Pilot Programs into demonstration projects that generate, test, and disseminate models of "best practices." More research is needed to determine which models of alternative calendars work best for different populations of students.**

When asked what the state could do to facilitate their efforts, administrators at the Minnesota year-round schools we interviewed offered the following ideas:

- pilot programs across the state "so people can see it works,"
- offer incentives for schools to try an alternative calendar, and
- make funding available to cover some of the additional costs associated with implementation and intersessions.

Before the Working Group could recommend financial incentives to encourage districts to pursue year-round education options (e.g., funds for transitional costs) the members felt that further evidence on the effectiveness and impact of alternative calendars was needed.

The Working Group thus proposes that the current Extended Learning and Year-Round Pilot Program be expanded and extended to allow more districts to become demonstration sites and to incorporate more careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of key processes (e.g., barriers to planning and implementation), outcomes (e.g., student achievement, behavior, and attitudes), and program effectiveness (e.g., cost-benefit analyses, identification of key program features). In particular, we propose evaluations of programs that *reallocate* and/or *increase* the time available for instruction:

Key questions to guide the evaluation of these programs include:

- What are the mechanisms by which the reallocation of existing instructional time throughout the year (alternative calendars) and/or increases in the amount of instructional time (extended learning programs) affects student learning and other key outcomes? How

do these results vary by type of program and participant characteristics? What unintended consequences are likely to arise under these circumstances?

- What are the most common barriers to the planning and implementation of alternative calendars and extended learning programs? What strategies have sites employed to overcome these barriers? What barriers still exist?
- What do effective models of alternative calendars and extended learning programs look like? To what extent are "best practices" in education present or absent in these models?
- How cost-effective are the different models of alternative calendars and extended learning programs?

In addressing the limitations of prior research, this evaluation would involve:

- both formative feedback to sites for purposes of program improvement, and summative data on key outcomes, overall effectiveness, and models of "best practices";
- control group comparisons (e.g., matched sample of schools on an alternative calendar to those on traditional calendar, pre/post data from schools converting to alternative calendars, and comparison of programs that add time vs. those that do not);
- longitudinal data collection (3-5 years);
- analysis of differences by socioeconomic status, ethnicity, prior achievement, type of schedule (e.g., single- or multi-track), and the amount of time added (e.g., through intersessions and other extended day, week, and year programming)

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Alternative Calendar Working Group

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Appendix B

Glossary of Key Terms

Alternative Calendar: Any school calendar, which differs from the traditional school calendar. Includes calendars that rearrange the existing amount of instructional time, add time to the school year, include an optional summer term, and/or completely individualize a student's schedule.

Extended Day: Programs, which increase instructional time over the school day for remediation or enrichment, on either a voluntary or mandatory basis. Includes before and after school programs or longer school days for all students.

Extended Learning Programs: Any program that extends instructional time by adding time to the school day, week or year.

Extended Week: Programs, which increase instructional time through weekend programming for remediation or enrichment on a voluntary or mandatory basis.

Extended Year: Programs, which increase instructional time beyond the required or average number of school days (175-180 days) on a voluntary or mandatory basis.

Extended School Year Services: Services provided to students, during times when school is not in session, in order to prevent excessive regression of, and excessive time to recoup, basic life skills. Such services are only available to students who are receiving special education due to a disability and whom their planning team, has determined,, to need such service.

Flexible Learning Year Program: Any school district plan approved by the State Board of Education that utilizes buildings and facilities throughout the entire year or provides optional scheduling plans during the learning year. Such plans include, but are not limited to, 45/15 plans, four-quarter plans, quinmester plans, extended learning year plans, flexible all-year plans, and four-day week plans.

Intersession: Break in instruction for students on year-round calendars, typically 2-4 weeks in length. Educational programming is often offered during these breaks and can include enrichment, remediation, and recreation options. Such programming may be offered either on- or off-campus, depending on space availability. Attendance is usually voluntary, but may be mandatory for students needing remediation.

Learning Year Program: A program, which provides instruction throughout the year. Pupils participating in a learning year program may accelerate progress toward grade level or graduation requirements. All area learning centers and approved alternative schools are automatically designated as Learning Year programs. Other schools need Learning Year designation from the Commissioner; that designation allows districts to report more than one

Average Daily Membership during the year for a student if the district ensures that students do not generate additional pupil units over the course of their careers in the district.

Regression: The decline in knowledge and skills that can result from an interruption in the education of a student with a disability. One of the two criteria for determining eligibility for Extended School Year services.

Recoupment: The amount of time it takes to regain a prior level of functioning after an interruption in the education of a student with a disability. One of the two criteria for determining eligibility for Extended School Year services.

Multi-Track Calendar: A year-round calendar in which students and teachers are broken into groups, with each group assigned to one of several tracks with staggered instructional blocks and vacation periods. At any moment in time, a percentage of the student body and staff are on vacation. Multi-track programs generally have a break in late December and a one to two-week summer break, which are common across all tracks.

Single-Track Calendar: A year-round calendar in which the entire student body and staff follow the same schedule of instructional periods and vacation.

Traditional School Calendar: School operates for nine months, September to June, five days per week, with an approximately twelve-week summer vacation.

Year-Round Calendar: A school calendar in which blocks of instruction and vacation are spread throughout the year to make learning more continuous. Such programs do not necessarily add to the instructional days required of students, but simply reallocate the typical 175-180 school days so that no single vacation break exceeds eight weeks.

Appendix C

Contact Information for Minnesota Schools on an Alternative Calendar

Minnesota Year-Round Schools

Bernie Anderson, Principal
(612) 351-6400
Rutherford Elementary School
1875 South Greeley Street
Stillwater, MN 55082

Lee Bauer, Principal
(651) 487-7362
Inter-District Arts & Science
Middle School
1495 Rice Street
St. Paul, MN 55117

Les Ernster, Principal
(507) 281-6100
Longfellow Elementary School
1615 SE Marion Road
Rochester, MN 55904

Carole Gupton, Principal
(612) 595-0748
School of Extended Learning
1751 Kelly Drive
Golden Valley, MN 55427

Gary Hawkins, Co-director/teacher
(612) 689-2985
Minnesota Center
315 - 7th Lane NE
Cambridge, MN 55008

Linda Lawrie, Principal
(651) 702-5700
Valley Crossing Community
Elementary School
9900 Park Crossing
Woodbury, MN 55125

Cheryl Martens, Principal
(612) 885-8401
Bravo! Middle School
8900 Portland Avenue So.
Bloomington, MN 55420

Joan Rourke, Principal
(651) 290-7595
Four Seasons A+ School
340 Colborne Street
St. Paul, MN 55102

Fred Storti, Principal
(651) 487-5450
Tri-District School
30 East Country Road B
Maplewood, MN 55117

Dee Thomas, Teacher facilitator
(507) 248-3353
New Country Charter School
115 North Main Street
LeSueur, MN 56058

Tess Tierman, Director
(651) 647-6000
Skills for Tomorrow Charter School
547 Wheeler Street No.
St. Paul, MN 55104

Minnesota Alternative Calendar Schools

Milo Cutter, Administrator/teacher
City Academy Charter School
958 Jessie Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 298-4624
Flexible continuous year (since 1992)
Ages 15-21; voluntary
95 students

Shirley Gilmore, Coordinator
Rosemount A.L.C.
15025 Glazier Avenue
Apple Valley, MN 55124
(612) 431-8720
Modified 30-5 (since 1991)
Grades 9-12; voluntary
170-190 students

James Walker, Superintendent
North Branch Schools
Technological Regional Integrated Organization (TRIO) Year-Round School Project
(project of North Branch, Rush City, and Chisago Lakes Districts)
Box 370, 320 Main Street
North Branch, MN 55056
(651) 674-1011
Flexible continuous year (since 1997)
Grades 4-12; voluntary

Mary Stafford, Head of Schools
Edison Kenwood Charter School
1750 Kenwood Avenue
Duluth, MN 55811
(218) 728-9556 ext. 2103
Extended day and year (since 1997)
Grades K-9; voluntary
750 students

Mike Trok, Principal
North Branch Senior High School
Box 370, 38175 Grand Avenue
North Branch, MN 55056
(651) 674-1500
Traditional calendar with summer option (since 1988)
Grades 9-12; voluntary
1000 students

Appendix D

Implementing a Year-Round Calendar: Questions To Consider[1]

ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

A. Capital outlay

1. Will the plan eliminate the need to build?

2. How many more students can the schools hold with this plan?

3. How much money can be saved in dollars? In tax rate?

4. Is the need for new building(s) or more space temporary, or will there be a need to build eventually?

5. Is air conditioning necessary? If so, how much will it cost? Can it be installed in the old building? Will it be provided in the new building?

6. Are other changes needed in building designs or capital goods to make the changeover?

B. Operating budgets

1. How much money can be saved in dollars? In tax rates?

2. How will this affect the cost of administrators?
   a. Will administrators work a longer year?
   b. Will they get paid more?
   c. Will more administrators be needed?
   d. Will schedules have to be computerized?
   e. Will pupil accounting be more complex?
   f. Will more secretarial help be needed?

3. How will this affect the cost of plant maintenance?
   a. How can the previous summer maintenance work be completed with school operating all year?
   b. Will custodians do the maintenance work they usually do at times students are not in school?

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[1] Glines, *Year-Round Education: History, Philosophy, Future*, pp. 104-112. Reprinted with the permission of the National Association for Year-Round Education.

c. Will this require the employment of extra maintenance staff?
d. Will different equipment or supplies be needed for continuous maintenance?

4. How will this affect costs for health, food and other special services?
   a. Will the nurses work all year? Cafeteria help?
   b. Will as many nurses, cafeteria help, or others be needed?

5. How will this affect the instructional staff budget?
   a. If fewer classrooms are needed, does this mean fewer teachers will be employed at one time?
   b. Can the employment of teachers on tenure be terminated?
   c. Will reducing teacher-pupil ratios instead of reducing staff absorb savings in the number of teachers?
   d. Will teachers be paid on a prorated basis for additional timed worked?
   e. Will they be paid on a 12-month basis with a month of vacation with pay like an administrator?
   f. Will this change in schedule have an impact on the cost of fringe benefits?
   g. Will teachers working four quarters a year receive more sick leave? More retirement credit?

6. How will this affect the instructional materials and supplies budget?
   a. Will funds need to be provided for curriculum revision?
   b. Will new textbooks be needed or will the present ones fit a reorganized curriculum?
   c. Will other materials and equipment be used?
   d. Can the number of textbooks be reduced in the same way as classrooms and teachers?
   e. Can scheduling their use all year reduce the amounts of other supplies or equipment?

7. How will this affect the plant operation budget?
   a. Will custodians be employed all year as custodians, or will they do some of the maintenance?
   b. Can the custodial staff be reduced proportionately to compensate for the longer year?
   c. When will the custodial staff schedule vacations?
   d. Will this cost more to hire temporary replacements for custodians on vacation?
   e. How much will it cost to keep the building air-conditioned?

8. How will the year-round operation of the school affect insurance?

9. How will it affect the cost of pupil transportation?
   a. Will the number of buses and bus drivers be reduced to compensate for the longer year of operation?
   b. What affect will continuous (year-round) use of buses have on the cost of maintaining buses? on the life expectancy of each bus?

c. Will all bus schedules have to be maintained all year, or will entire neighborhoods covered by a complete "bus run" be scheduled for vacations simultaneously?
d. Will buses be provided for recreation activities during the regular school year for children not in school?
e. Will drivers become full-time employees, requiring full-time benefits (health insurance, vacation and sick days, and pension payments)?[2]

10. Will the school continue, delete, or expand its present recreation programs?
    a. Will the facilities currently used for recreational activities in the summer be available and operable on a year-round basis? If so, how much will it cost? If not, how can appropriate facilities be provided and how much will it cost?
    b. Will qualified staff be available on a year-round basis? Will it cost more or less?

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. Curriculum

1. Does this schedule require a revision in the present curriculum?

2. Will the curriculum be organized into standard 45 or 50-day units of study (as compared to the common 90 day units or semesters used)?

3. If not organized into quarter units, how will it be organized?

4. Will the curriculum units be scheduled independently from each other or will they be provided in a sequence with prerequisites?

5. Will all courses commonly offered be equally available for all students, if students are in multiple tracks?

6. Will a student who fails a course one quarter be able to reschedule it the next quarter? Will the student need to shift sections to do this? If so, what happens to the other subjects?

7. Are appropriate materials and technology available for the revised curriculum?

8. Will the students be given a greater choice or selection of courses, or will the same classes simply be reorganized into four 45-day (quarter) units instead of two 90-day (semester) units—or whatever calendar configuration is selected?

9. Will the grading or report card systems change?

10. Will the sections be organized on the basis of ability?

[2] Question 9e did not appear in the original NAYRE publication but arose during discussions of the Alternative Calendar Working Group

11. Can a student attend four quarters instead of three and graduate earlier?

12. How does this new structure provide for individual differences, and provide students options and alternative learning styles?

13. Will the same experiences be offered all year, or will new experiences be added during the summer appropriate to that time of year?

14. What happens to summer school as it now exists? Will students be able to take enrichment and/or remedial courses? Short-term courses?

15. How will students make up required courses?

16. How will credits be given? How many will be required to graduate? an credits be eliminated?

17. How will extended absences due to illness or necessary vacation affect make-up of work for short courses?

18. How can specialized or advanced experiences be offered continuously?

19. Do students become fatigued if they go to school longer than 180 days a year?

20. Do they forget less when vacations are shorter?

B. Co-Curricular Activities

1. Can students on vacation participate in interscholastic sports?

2. Are they eligible players according to the athletic association?

3. Can students on vacation also participate in band, drill team, and cheerleading?

4. Can students on vacation participate in school dances and other student activities?

5. Can they participate in school plays, newspaper, and yearbook?

6. Can they visit school when they do not have anything better to do?

7. Can they eat in the cafeteria with friends when their friends are in school and they are not? If so, do they receive federal subsidies?

8. How can the school prom and graduation be scheduled if there is no time when all the students will be in school together?

9. Will students graduate each quarter?

10. What "class" will they belong to?

11. What will this do to class reunions?

12. How can friends be scheduled into the same sections?

13. Will boys be absent from school excessively at times when their girl friends are on vacation and vice versa?

C. Special Services

1. Will guidance, health, and other special services be provided all year?

2. Will services be continuous to students while they are on vacation?

D. Qualifications of Teachers

1. How will teachers be helped to prepare for this change in the curriculum? Will they be allotted time with pay to prepare? Will there be appropriate in-service programs?

2. Will colleges be preparing teachers for year-round education?

3. Will the college schedule coincide with the school schedule so teachers can take college courses during the vacation break, or will there be other arrangements?

4. If not, how will teachers meet their certification requirements?

5. When will new teachers begin? Will the change in schedule hamper recruitment of qualified teachers?

6. Will a teacher suffer from fatigue by teaching all year?

7. What will this schedule do to the teacher-pupil ratio? What will it do to the number courses taught by teachers or the number of teacher preparations?

E. Administrative Procedures

1. If classrooms are shared on a rotating basis, do students change classrooms each quarter?

2. Will teachers have classrooms to call their own?

3. How can a student change from one section to another?

4. If students transfer from another school during the year, can the individual begin school immediately, or might they be placed on vacation initially? If they move in during the summer, might they miss their vacation, or possibly take an extra one?

5. How will students be assigned to a section initially?

6. Will brothers and sisters be on the same schedule?

7. When do children begin first grade or kindergarten? Might they have to wait an extra quarter, or half year, or more?

CHANGING LIFESTYLES

A. Impact of School Schedule on Other Organized Activities

1. What impact will the change in the school schedule have on summer recreation programs?

2. What impact will it have on family vacations?
   a. If parents have vacation in the summer, can the children, too? How about other times of the year?
   b. Can parents split vacations, a growing practice?
   c. How will the extended vacation (13 weeks, e.g.) provided for workers by some industries be managed?

3. Can married teachers have their vacations at the same time as their spouses, if they both work in the same system? If only one works for the school?

4. What effect will the school calendar have on the schedules of working parents?

5. What if parent vacation schedules are changed? Can children change sections in school?

6. What changes in the work force schedules are occurring that might influence the school calendar?

7. How will Christmas, Easter, and other holidays be scheduled?

8. If students are already on vacation during holidays, will they receive compensatory time in addition?

B. Personal Preferences in Scheduling

1. Will the students have choices, initially, as to their group selection and when they have vacations?

2. Will parents have a choice?

3. Will brothers and sisters be on the same tracks?

4. Will parents with only one child have a choice?

5. Will teachers have a choice of teaching nine or twelve months?

6. Will teachers have a choice as to the sections/tracks they teach?

C. Employment Opportunities

1. Will teachers be employed in recreation or other activities during vacation periods?

2. If teacher vacations are divided into small segments throughout the year, what will that do to their outside employment opportunities?

3. What will such schedules do to the employment opportunities of students?

4. What will the school schedule do to workforce vacation schedules?

5. If fewer teachers are required, what happens to those who are not needed?

6. Will the school schedule encourage the employment of youth by industry on a rotating, year-round basis (four students rotating to hold one full-time job?)

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

A. Making the Decisions to Change

1. Who will decide what schedule will be used? How?

2. How many need to approve it to achieve the schedule change?

3. How many need to oppose it to prevent the change?

4. How will the opinions of people be obtained?

B. Making the Changeover

1. Can we make the change immediately or what has to be done first?

2. Can the secondary change without the elementary or vice versa?

3. How is the changeover scheduled and when—during the school year or summer? Will some students miss their vacation in the changeover and will some have extra time off?

C. Feedback

1. How will we know how the people like this system?

2. How soon can we change back if we do not like it?

OBJECTIVES VERSUS ALTERNATIVES

A. If a major objective is to house more children in existing buildings, are there other approaches that might be considered?

1. Double shifting?

2. A longer, but flexible, day?

3. A flexible week?

4. The "store front" concept?

B. If an objective is to save money, are there other ways this can be accomplished and still maintain quality education?

1. How much does it cost to fail a student?

2. How much does it cost for remedial work? Could this be avoided by honestly adapting the curriculum to the needs of each student?

3. Do all students need to spend the same amount of time on each subject? Could allowing students to progress at their own rate save money?

4. Are all subjects now being taught really useful? Is the way they are being taught the best method?

5. Could some of the high school course work be combined with college credit classes to avoid duplication?

6. Could some students earn a living and still earn high school credits "on the job?"

7. Are there some people in the community with valuable skills and talents who would gladly help at a school without compensation?

C. Are there ways that quality education can be achieved through other changes in the school structure?

1. Do all students need the same amount of time to complete a course? If not, how can it be scheduled?

2. Do students of a given age or group need to learn the same things at the same time? If not, how can the schedules be adjusted to their needs?

3. Do all students learn in the same way or need to use the same materials? Do they need to be in the classroom to learn or may they learn some things more effectively in camp, in a factory, in city hall, on a riverbank, or someplace else? If so, how can schedules be adjusted to accommodate their needs?

4. Is knowledge in organized disciplines taught best in fifty-minute capsules, or can students sometimes learn best by pursuing real problems over extended periods of time through interrelated curriculum (not by departments, separate disciplines, or separate subjects)?

D. If the need is to adapt to changing lifestyles and living patterns, how is the school going to adapt to the following, any or all of which may develop?

1. A four-day workweek, a three-day workweek, a six-day workweek?

2. Extended and/or split vacations?

3. A longer or shorter workday?

4. A shift in time of day (or night) to attend school?

5. Need for continuous lifespan education?

6. The impact of other educational institutions such as television, computer-assisted instruction, and distance learning?

Appendix E

Acknowledgements

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Table 4. Minnesota schools with year-round calendars interviewed January 1999.[1]

School *Location*	Grade Level/# of Students	Calendar/ # of Instructional Days	When Instituted/New School or Conversion from Traditional Calendar	Intersession Programming Offered	Added Time
Bravo! Middle School Bloomington	7-8/240	modified 25-5/ 173	1991/new	No	
Four Seasons A+ School St. Paul	K-6/350	45-15/174	1997/new	Yes	
Inter-district Arts & Science Middle School, St. Paul	6-7/60	45-15/176	1998/new	Yes	
Longfellow Elementary School Rochester	K-5/247	45-15/178	1995/conversion	Yes	Voluntary extended day (before and after school)
Minnesota Center Cambridge	5-8/162	45-15/183	1996/conversion	Yes	Voluntary extended day (after school two days/week)
New Country Charter School LeSueur	7-12/140	25-5/176	1993/new	No	Personalized continuous year
Rutherford Elementary School[2] Stillwater	K-6/150[3]	45-15/178	1998/new	Yes	8 hour school day
School of Extended Learning Minneapolis	K-6/320	45-15/173	1995/conversion	Yes	9½ hour school day
Skills for Tomorrow Charter School, *St. Paul*	7-12/120	25-5, 30-10/ 193	1994/new	No	Longer school year
Tri-District School Maplewood	K-6/425	45-15/176	1996/new	Yes	
Valley Crossing Community Elementary School[4] Woodbury	K-6/300[5]	60-15/175	1996/new	Yes	

Notes: [1] This table does not contain all year-round schools currently in existence in Minnesota but includes all those listed in the NAYRE *Twenty-Fourth Reference Directory of Year-Round Education Programs for the 1997-98 School Year, which* met the criteria outlined in this report.

[2] School-within-a-school (traditional calendar and year-round calendar students are not separated, however).

[3] This number represents those students (of the 640 total in the school) who are on a year-round calendar.

[4] School-within-a-school.

[5] This number represents those students (of the 900 total in the school) who are on a year-round calendar.