

Key Arguments For and Against Year-Round Calendar for Schools

Pros of the Year-Round Calendar

1. More frequent breaks keep students refreshed and ready to learn.
2. Remediation sessions during breaks give students who fall behind the chance to catch up on their studies without waiting for summer school.
3. One week remediation programs offered during the time off between sessions provide the opportunity for lengthening the school year by as many as 20 days for the students who need it most.
4. Optional enrichment sessions give students the opportunity for additional learning experiences outside the classroom setting.
5. Proponents argue that with shorter summer breaks, students forget fewer of their lessons, allowing teachers to spend less time reviewing when school reconvenes in the fall.
6. Teachers say the shorter school sessions (typically 45 days, followed by a break of three to five weeks) allow them to incorporate more time for planning and help prevent teacher and student burnout.
7. Year-round schools may boost student attendance and reduce vandalism of school property.
8. Through multi-track scheduling in which a quarter of the student body is on break at any given time, the year-round calendar can be used to expand the capacity of an existing school, thus saving money on construction costs.
9. If offered on an optional basis, year-round schools provide a choice for parents who may find the calendar provides a better match for their work schedules.

Cons of the Year-Round Calendar

1. The jury is still out on whether students on the year-round calendar outperform their peers on the traditional calendar on standardized tests.
2. Year-round schools, if mandatory, may interfere with family traditions over the longer summer break offered under the traditional calendar.
3. Some experts dispute the claims of year-round school advocates that students forget much of what they learn over the summer, arguing instead that more breaks mean more memory loss.
4. Principals offering both year-round and traditional calendars at the same school—a popular choice in North Carolina—must juggle resources to make both calendars work.
5. Administrative and other non-classroom personnel at year-round schools have less “down time” when students don’t attend.
6. Year-round schools may carry slightly higher operating costs and place greater stress on school facilities. Many school systems do not choose to offset this by using the calendar to expand the capacity of existing buildings.
7. At the high-school level, the year-round schedule may interfere with some extracurricular activities and with summer jobs. In addition, the high school curriculum is more varied, which may make it harder to schedule classes so that all students have the opportunity to take them.
8. *Mandated* year-round schools may arouse the ire of parents, dividing communities and creating conflict for local school officials.
9. Seasonal amusement parks, summer camps, and other institutions dependent on summer business may feel threatened by a school schedule that could erode their work force or customer base.