



# Year-Round Calendars

# District Leadership Forum

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# 1) Executive Overview

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## Key Observations

**Profiled districts operate varying numbers of schools on year-round calendars. District A, District B, and District D** operate both year-round schools and schools on a traditional calendar. District A and District B operate multiple year-round elementary schools, one year-round middle school, and one year-round school for grades six to 12. All schools at **District C** operate on a year-round calendar.

**Gather feedback from parents and teachers on plans to implement year-round calendars before beginning the transition to year-round schools.**

Profiled districts held conferences and community forums to discuss year-round calendars with students, families, and teachers. These events allowed district administrators to advocate for year-round schools to the community and receive feedback from stakeholders that influenced policies to operate year-round schools. In response to teachers' concerns voiced during these events, administrators at **District C** allowed teachers who live in different districts to enroll their children at District C so their work schedule aligns with their children's school schedule.

**Use intersessions (i.e., a scheduled break between a period of school days) to provide academic support to students and hold professional development trainings for staff.**

All profiled districts schedule classes during intersessions. For example, contacts at **District A** note that school administrators offer classes in math, English, and occasionally science. These classes support students who struggle with course material and students who may have missed course content due to absence. **District C** also offers voluntary professional development for teachers during intersessions.

**Schedule intersessions that overlap with the vacations of schools using traditional calendars and do not overlap with mandatory testing. District B and District C** schedule one longer intersession every summer. Though shorter than the summer vacation for schools that operate on a traditional calendar, this intersession provides time for families with children enrolled at both year-round and traditional schools to vacation together. For the same reason, administrators at District B schedule winter and spring vacations to coincide with the vacations of schools at the district that use a traditional calendar. At District C, administrators also plan intersessions to ensure school is in session when the state typically schedules required standardized testing.

**Research on whether year-round calendars improve student academic performance is inconclusive.**

Contacts at profiled districts hypothesize that year-round schools reduce loss of learning over the summer and help students struggling academically due to additional academic support offered during intersessions. However, profiled districts have not conducted studies to examine the effects of year-round calendars on student performance or school climate. External studies that assess year-round schools find inconclusive evidence, with different studies reporting conflicting effects of year-round schooling on student performance and school climate.

## 2) Implementation

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### Motivation

#### **Profiled Districts Implement Year-Round Calendars to Increase School Capacity or Offer Choice of Schedule**

Contacts at **District A** and **District B** note that administrators wanted to operate several year-round schools at the district to offer families an alternative to the traditional calendar. Contacts at District A note that the district aspires to be “a district of choice,” or a district that allows parents to determine multiple aspects of their children’s education. By converting one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school to a year-round calendar, contacts state that administrators provide families the opportunity to choose their preferred schedule.

**District C** and **District D** transitioned schools to multi-track, year-round calendars to accommodate growth in the districts’ student population and mitigate the construction of new school facilities. At a multi-track school, the total number of students enrolled at the school is greater than the school building’s capacity. To avoid exceeding building capacity, schools ensure one track of students is always on an intersession (i.e., a scheduled break between a period of school days). Thus, multi-track, year-round schools allow districts to serve more students through existing schools.

While District C implemented a year-round calendar to manage growth in the student population, the district continues to operate year-round schools despite the rate of growth subsiding. Rather than switching schools back to a traditional calendar, district administrators transitioned all schools to a single-track (i.e., all students and staff are in school at the same time), year-round calendar. Contacts note that community members appear satisfied with the year-round calendar and that administrators do not find a reason to return to a traditional calendar. District D also transitioned some multi-track, year-round schools to a single-track, year-round calendar after growth in the student population at the district decreased. However, the district operates some schools on a traditional calendar to provide schedule options to families.

## Date of Year-Round Calendar Implementation and Number of Year-Round Schools at Profiled Districts

<b>District A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Date:</b> Implemented year-round schools in the mid-2000s.</li> <li>• <b>Number of schools:</b> Operates five year-round schools.</li> </ul>
<b>District B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Date:</b> Implemented first year-round schools in the 1990s.</li> <li>• <b>Number of schools:</b> Operates five year-round schools.</li> </ul>
<b>District C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Date:</b> Implemented multi-track, year-round schools in the 1980s.</li> <li>• <b>Number of schools:</b> Operates the entire district (i.e., more than 30 schools) on year-round calendars.</li> </ul>
<b>District D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Date:</b> Implemented multi-track, year-round schools in the early 2000s.</li> <li>• <b>Number of Schools:</b> Operates more than 30 year-round elementary and middle schools.</li> </ul>

## Logistics

### To Create a Plan to Implement a Year-Round Calendar, Solicit Input from Stakeholders

Contacts at **District A** and **District B** report that transitioning to a year-round calendar interested administrators at only a few schools initially. To increase support for year-round schools, administrators at several of District B’s schools invited community members to public forums to discuss the prospect of a year-round calendar and distributed Frequently Asked Questions documents explaining aspects of the calendar. Contacts note that two elementary schools transitioned to a year-round calendar following this outreach. Administrators monitored parents’ approval of the year-round calendar, measured partially by the number of applications each school received. Contacts report that high numbers of applications to year-round schools led administrators to believe that the community viewed year-round schooling positively. Because of the positive reaction, administrators transitioned three additional schools to a year-round calendar, including a school for grades six to eight and a school for grades six to 12.

Because **District C** and **District D** initially operated multi-track, year-round schools, their research and community approval processes differed from District A and District B. Similar to contacts at District A and District B, contacts at District C and District D emphasize the importance of discussing year-round schooling with the community prior to implementation. In addition to engaging teachers and the community, administrators at District D also discussed the prospect of year-round schooling with the facilities department early in the research process. Contacts note that administrators and facilitates department staff discussed modifications to existing school structures to accommodate a multi-track calendar, and how to construct new buildings built for multi-track schooling to accommodate additional growth in the student population.

Contacts at District C emphasize the importance of consulting with teachers before implementing year-round calendars. Prior to the year-round calendar, the children of many staff at District C attended school at neighboring districts. Contacts report that teachers expressed concern that on a year-round calendar, they would be working on a different schedule than their children’s school schedule. Because of teachers’ concerns, the Board of Trustees created a policy to allow all employees of District C to enroll their children at schools at District C, assuming the child maintained good attendance, behavior, and academic standing.

## Complete the Research and Evaluation Process Before Transitioning to Year-Round Schools

Contacts at **District B** and **District C** state that the process to research and implement year-round calendars did not take the district long. Contacts at District C estimate the process took one and a half years. Contacts at other profiled districts are not able to speak to the length of the planning and implementation process. Both District B and District C completed research, community outreach, and logistics planning before transitioning schools’ calendars. Because District B completed the research and planning process before implementing year-round calendars, administrators decided to transition all grades at each school to year-round schooling at the same time, rather than operating a pilot program for one grade or class.

## Common Steps in the Research and Evaluation Process to Implement a Year-Round Calendar at Profiled Districts



### Visit Schools with Year-Round Calendars

Administrators at **District C** visited other districts using year-round calendars to gather research on potential models of year-round schooling and each model’s effects.



### Consider State or Local Obstacles

Administrators at **District A** evaluated all aspects of how their operation of year-round schools would interact with state laws on school calendars.



### Engage Parents

Profiled districts held community meetings to discuss operating year-round schools. The public affairs department at **District B** surveyed parents early in the research process to gauge their interest in year-round schooling.



### Engage Teachers

Administrators at **District C** visited each level of school (e.g., middle, high) separately, because they believed teachers at each level would express different concerns and feedback.

## Create a Task Force or Central Office to Manage the Transition to Year-Round Schools

**District D** created an office of year-round education to guide the implementation of year-round calendars. Located in the district central administrative office, this office

consulted with and advised schools implementing a year-round calendar. The office also addressed all problems related to the transition to a year-round calendar. Contacts state that administrators closed the office of year-round education several years after most affected schools implemented a year-round calendar, because they felt that existing offices could resolve any remaining problems related to year-round schooling.

### Responsibilities of the Office of Year-Round Education at *District D*



**Monitor timelines** for the transition to year-round schools and determine materials necessary to build year-round, multi-track schools.



**Set guidelines** to revise teacher and administrator pay and allocate funding for salaries.



**Negotiate** with the state to ensure state funding arrives by the time school starts (i.e., mid-summer).

### Consider Stakeholders' Needs and State Laws to Create A Year-Round Calendar that Meets Expectations

Year-round schools at **District B** and **District D** operate on a schedule of nine weeks of school followed by three weeks of intersession. Contacts at District B note this model may have been selected because administrators knew other school districts that used it.

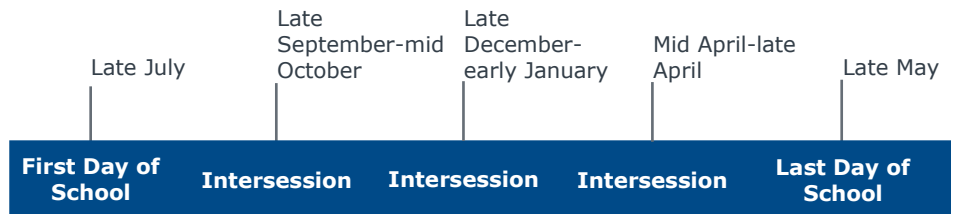
**District C** operates on a schedule of nine weeks of school followed by two weeks of intersession. At **District A**, the distribution and length of intersessions varies by school, with elementary and middle schools typically operating with nine weeks of classes followed by three weeks of intersession. Contacts add that changes to state law may require districts to adjust a year-round calendar for the subsequent school years.

Contacts at District B and District C note that year-round schools operate with a longer summer intersession (generally six to eight weeks). Contacts at District B note that families often want to travel during the summer. Because of this, administrators ensure summer intersession, as well as Christmas and spring intersessions, align with traditional school calendar vacations to allow families with children at both year-round and traditional schools to travel together. Administrators at District C also ensure that the year-round calendar does not include intersessions during the same weeks they are required to administer state-mandated standardized tests to students.

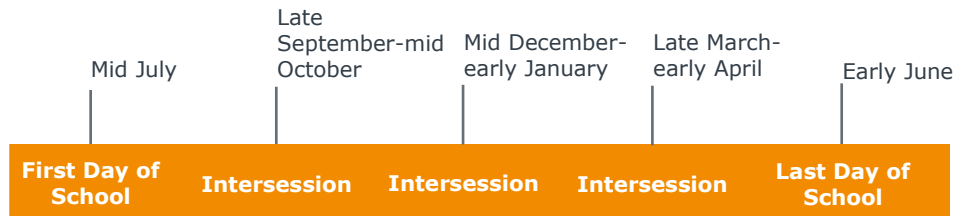


## 2018-2019 Year-Round Calendars at *District A* and *District B*

### District A



### District B



# 3) Operations

## Athletics

### Consider Creating Intramural Sports Programs for Year-Round High Schools

Contacts at all profiled districts report difficulties maintaining high school athletic programs for schools on a year-round calendar. Contacts at **District D** note that the district chose not to extend the year-round calendar to high schools in the district partly because administrators believed the schedule would not be compatible with high school sport programs that competed with high school programs at other districts.

### Opportunities to Engage High School Athletes at Year-Round Schools at Profiled Districts



#### Offer intramural sports

Year-round high schools at **District A** and **District B** operate intramural sports programs.



#### Negotiate to join existing athletic organizations

Contacts at **District C** report the district initially struggled to offer high school sports to student athletes under the year-round calendar. Today, high school athletes can participate in a competitive association, though contacts could not speak to the process that led to the high schools' inclusion in this association.



#### Allow athlete participation in other schools' athletics programs

Administrators at **District B** allow high school athletes at the year-round school to compete athletically in the attendance zone where they live, rather than just where they go to school. This means students may attend one school and compete athletically with another.

## Intersessions

### Use Intersessions to Offer Remedial Support and Enrichment Opportunities to Students

Intersession courses at **District A** do not include new material or content for gifted and talented students.

All profiled districts offer programs for students during intersessions. Year-round schools at **District A** use diagnostics or teacher assessments to identify students struggling in math, English, and science. Teachers offer classes during intersessions to support these students and ensure they meet learning goals. At **District B**, the community education department sponsors camps to support students academically and serve as child care for parents. **District C** also offers classes to struggling students. The district limits classes to the first week of every two-week intersession and reserves the second week of intersession for teacher professional development.

The extent of intersession programs at profiled districts depends on student demand and school budgets. At District C and District A, teachers inform administrators that they are interested in teaching classes during intersessions. The number of teachers selected depends on the amount of funding available. The principal of each school at District C decides which teachers to hire to teach during intersessions and announces the appointments.



### Coordinate with Child Care Providers and Community Organizations to Offer Enrichment Opportunities to Students During Intersessions

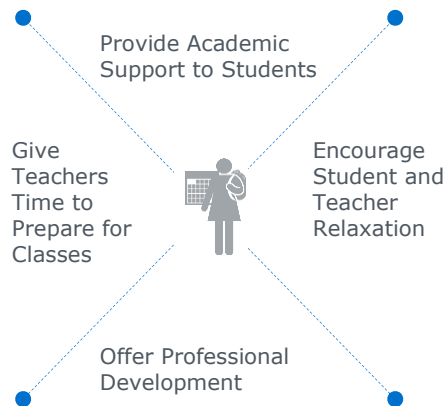
Within **District C's** community, multiple organizations offer options for child care or student enrichment. A local community college creates programs that students may attend during intersessions, a nearby military base offers camps for students, and a local day care occasionally offers discounted rates during intersessions. Contacts believe that communicating the year-round calendar to the community encourages providers to offer these opportunities.

## Schedule Professional Development for Teachers During Intersessions to Address Instructional Weaknesses

Profiled districts offer professional development for teachers during intersessions. For example, teachers at **District C** can attend trainings to receive technology certifications or receive training to instruct English language learners or gifted and talented students during intersessions. If a specific topic has gained heightened importance (e.g., mental health), contacts report that administrators at District C will schedule a training on that topic during the next intersession. At profiled districts, most professional development opportunities during intersessions are optional.

Administrators at District C also allow teachers to use their classrooms during intersessions to prepare for the next six weeks of class.

## Sample Uses of Intersessions at Profiled Districts



## Staff Contracts

## Pay Teachers and Administrators for Additional Instruction Time and Responsibilities

Profiled districts do not significantly adjust teacher contracts when their school transitions to a year-round calendar. Because teachers work in the classroom for the same total number of days on traditional and year-round calendars, teacher compensation does not change when a school transitions from a traditional calendar to a year-round calendar. Contacts at **District A** note that administrators adjusted the pay schedule for teachers who transition from a traditional calendar to a year-

round calendar, because the district began to send teachers' paychecks at different intervals.

**District D** increased the pay of principals, technology support staff, and other administrative staff employed at multi-track, year-round schools because they work when the school is open. On a year-round calendar, the school is always open because only one of the multiple tracks of students is on intersession. However, teacher pay at District D did not increase, because teachers do not work throughout the year. Teachers typically are on intersession at the same time as their students.

The graphic below highlights how District D adjusted pay for administrators, and how two other profiled districts structure pay for teachers who elect to teach courses during intersessions.

### **Additional Pay Offered to Staff at Profiled Year-Round Schools**



School administrators pay teachers on an hourly basis for courses taught during intersessions.



School administrators pay teachers to teach or attend professional development during intersessions. This is not a contractual obligation, and teachers are paid in fixed amounts.



The district pays principals and other administrators and specialists at multi-track, year-round schools for 12 months of work because the school is always open. Principals are also given a two percent bonus annually because contacts explain that it is more difficult to manage a year-round, multi-track school.

## 4) Impacts

### Student Success

#### The Effect of Year-Round Calendars on Student Achievement and School Climate is Inconclusive

Profiled districts have not conducted studies or collected data on how year-round calendars affect student success or school climate at schools in the district. Contacts at **District B** suggest year-round schooling reduces the amount of learning students lose over summer break. Contacts at **District A** and **District C** note that their year-round schools are high-performing but cannot attribute their performance to the year-round calendar.

Independent research on the impacts of year-round schools on student achievement is inconclusive. For example, studies cited in a [South Dakota Department of Education briefing](#) find different conclusions on whether year-round calendars boost student achievement.<sup>1</sup> The 2012 [report](#) from the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) finds that Standards of Learning (SOL) in Virginia do not significantly improve for students at year-round schools. However, the study suggests year-round schools may increase the scores for specific subgroups of students. The report suggests that additional instructional time during intersessions or reduced loss of learning during the summer may account for the improvement of these groups on SOL tests.

#### Varying Research Findings on the Effects of Year-Round Calendars on Student Success<sup>2</sup>



##### Clear Improvement:

A [briefing](#) by the California Department of Education states that year-round schools reduce learning loss during the summer among students and relieve student and teacher stress because of the frequent intersessions.



##### Some Improvement:

The JLARC [report](#) states that SOL test scores are not statistically different between students at traditional schools and year-round schools in Virginia. However, the study finds some evidence that SOL tests scores among black students, Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students may improve more quickly at year-round schools.



##### No Improvement:

A 2007 [study](#) examining the effects of a transition to year-round schools at a North Carolina district finds that the transition did not impact student academic achievement, either for the average student or for racial subgroups of students.

1) South Dakota Department of Education, "Year Round & Extended Year School Overview," accessed January 29, 2019. <http://doe.sd.gov/secretary/documents/0912LTRAy.pdf>.

2) California Department of Education, "Year-Round Education Program Guide," August, 2018. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr/guide.asp>; Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), "Review of Year-Round Schools," October, 2012. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt430.pdf>;

American Economic Association, "The Impact of Year-Round Schooling on Academic Achievement: Evidence from Mandatory School Calendar Conversions," November, 2012. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.4.4.230>.

### Operating Single-Track, Year-Round Schools Does Not Significantly Affect the School Budget

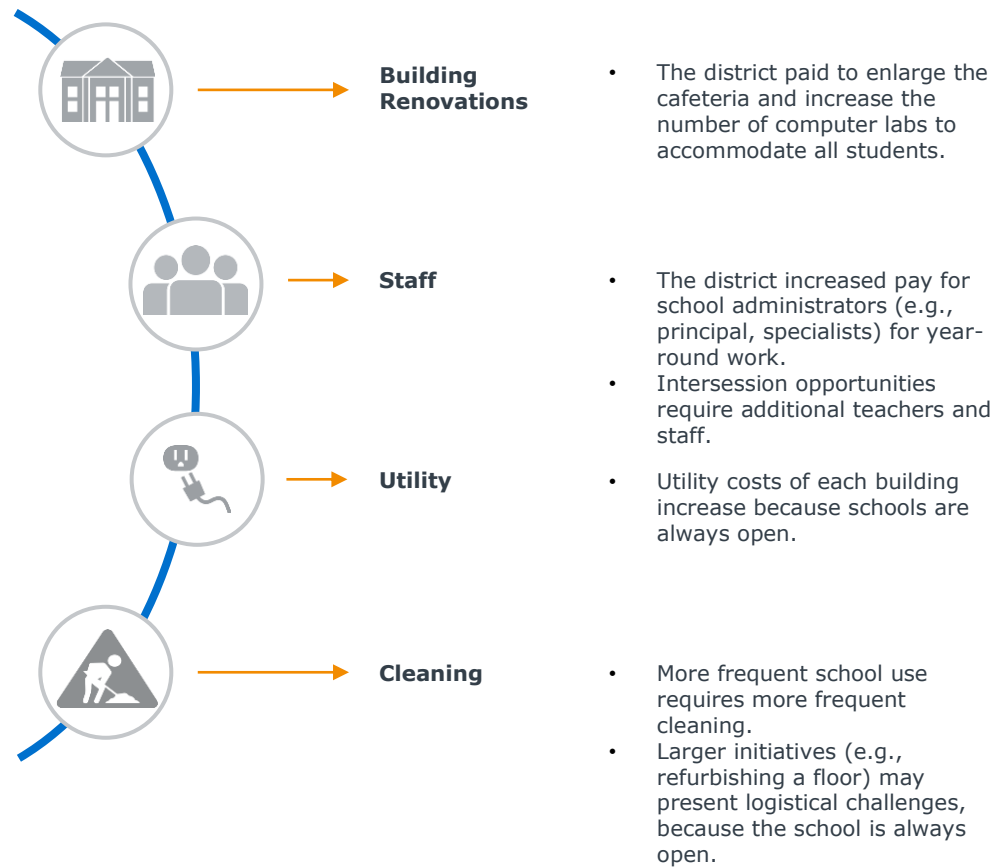
Contacts at **District A**, **District B**, and **District C** are not aware of significant costs or cost-savings related to operating schools on single-track, year-round calendars. District A uses district funds to pay teachers to instruct struggling students during intersessions. However, contacts state that year-round schools pay teachers with funds that would be used for similar purposes at schools using traditional calendars (e.g., after school program, summer school program). Contacts at District C state that isolating the effects of the year-round calendar on the budget is difficult, because the district has experienced recent growth in the student population that has increased costs.

Contacts at other profiled district note increases in costs that are unique to the implementation of a year-round calendar at their district. Contacts at District B explain that it costs the district more to transport students to year-round schools at the district because students from different locations within the district's school zones apply to attend the year-round schools. However, contacts attribute this cost to the district's focus on school choice rather than an inherent cost to operate a year-round school.

Many schools at **District D** that implement a year-round calendar experience cost savings because they operate on a multi-track, year-round calendar. Overall, the district saves money operating year-round schools because buildings that operate on a multi-track, year-round calendar serve more students than traditional schools. Contacts report that the district spends less on each student because the district builds fewer schools to address growth in the student population.

However, multi-track schools at District D experience higher costs in some areas of operation. Single-track, year-round schools may experience similar increases in some costs (e.g., increases in utility costs), depending on the extent of intersession programs. For example, District C offers an extended summer vacation with less intersession programming, partly to decrease the amount the district needs to pay for air conditioning.

## Costs Related to Multi-Track, Year-Round Schools at *District D*



### The 2012 JLARC Report Finds Costs Increase at Single-Track, Year-Round Schools in Dollars and Percentage of Expenditures

The [report](#) finds that intersessions' programs and personnel contribute the most to increases in costs/ Among schools consulted for the study, individual annual school expenditures for intersessions ranged from \$31,000 to \$550,000. When averaged across consulted schools, these costs comprise three percent of school expenditures. **Pages 29-39** of the JLARC's report discuss district costs in more detail.

### Profiled Districts Use Surveys and Interactions with Parents to Assess Stakeholder Approval of Year-Round Schools

Profiled districts have not recently used surveys or forums to assess the extent to which stakeholders approve of year-round schools. Contacts at **District A** report that administrators hope to use surveys in subsequent years to gauge the level of parent support for year-round schools and track the number of applications to each year-round school at the district. Contacts at District A and **District B** report that year-round schools consistently receive many applications. However, contacts at both districts note that the number of applications may be due to the strength of the school rather than its year-round calendar.

Contacts note that moving students at a multi-track school from one track to another may interfere with child care and family plans. Because of this inconvenience, contacts report that administrators try to avoid making students switch track whenever possible.

Contacts at District A, District B, and **District C** feel that most of the community involved with year-round schools prefers the year-round calendar to a traditional calendar based on conversations with parents and staff. Contacts at District C report that they surveyed parents approximately five years ago and found that they approved of the year-round calendar. Contacts at District B also believe that staff support the year-round calendar because they do not experience difficulty attracting teachers or principals to teach at these schools. Parents at District B requested the creation of a year-round high school because they adjusted to the year-round calendar during their children's elementary and middle school education.

Contacts at **District D** believe that parents either strongly approve of or strongly dislike the year-round calendar. Contacts state that some parents feel that intersessions help students avoid stress, while others find the calendar an obstacle to summer activities (e.g., student summer camps, family vacations).

### Offer Additional Assistance and Options to Families That Experience Difficulty Navigating Year-Round Schools

Contacts note that year-round calendars can create obstacles for specific populations the school serves. For example, divorced parents often structure custody agreements with a traditional calendar in mind. Contacts at **District D** note that families new to the district may be confused or unhappy with the year-round calendar. Because of this, year-round schools provide information about year-round calendars to new families.



## Strategies to Support Families New to Year-Round Schools at Profiled Districts

### Deliver Information Up Front

Send families copies of the calendar as soon as they enroll. Ensure new students understand the calendar during their first week of classes.



### Send Reminder Messages

Send new families text or voice messages before each intersession to remind them a break is about to start.



### Offer Calendar Choice

Clearly communicate to parents available alternative options if they are opposed to year-round schooling.

### Utilize Intersessions

Use courses offered during intersessions to ensure new students stay on track with classes and make up absences.

## 5) Research Methodology

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### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- Why did contact districts transition to a year-round calendar?
- What structures did contact districts establish to guide the district through the implementation of a year-round calendar?
- How did contact districts determine which year-round calendar to use?
- What obstacles or barriers do contact districts report encountering during the transition to a year-round calendar?
- How long did the transition to a year-round calendar take at contact districts?
- How do contact districts assess stakeholders' perceptions of the year-round calendar after implementation?
- How do year-round calendars affect school climate at contact districts?
- What schedule do athletic programs use at contact districts using a year-round calendar?
- How do contract districts write teacher contracts and adjust compensation and benefits using a year-round calendar?
- How do year-round calendars impact academic achievement of students at contact districts?
- What costs or cost-savings did contact districts experience after implementing a year-round calendar?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries ([eab.com](http://eab.com))
- Profiled districts' websites
- American Economic Association. "The Impact of Year-Round Schooling on Academic Achievement: Evidence from Mandatory School Calendar Conversions." November, 2012. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.4.4.230>.
- California Department of Education. "Year-Round Education Program Guide." August, 2018. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr/guide.asp>.
- Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). "Review of Year-Round Schools." October, 2012. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt430.pdf>.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). "Search for Public School Districts." Accessed January 29, 2019. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>.
- South Dakota Department of Education. "Year Round & Extended Year School Overview." Accessed January 29, 2019. <http://doe.sd.gov/secretary/documents/0912LTRAy.pdf>.
- Virginia Department of Education. "Superintendent's Memo #125-18." Accessed January 29, 2019. [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents\\_memos/2018/125-18.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2018/125-18.shtml).

# Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed administrators who manage or monitor year-round schools at districts that use year-round calendars at secondary schools.

## A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Student Enrollment
District A	South	50,000
District B	South	35,000
District C	South	45,000
District D	South	160,000