

LCSD Calendar Committee: Background & FAQs

What is the purpose of the calendar committee?

The calendar committee is made up of volunteers who have been meeting since October 2018 to look at calendar ideas for the district's next calendar cycle. The district tries not to majorly change its school calendar for 3 years at a time so that families have some predictability. We are at the end of our last 3 year cycle, which is why we're here now. The goal of the calendar committee is to examine what type of calendar, and what calendar features, can best meet the needs of students, families, staff and the community for the next 3 year cycle.

What were some of the constraints that the calendar committee had to work with?

Due to state regulations, negotiated agreements and core values held by the committee, there were some constraints that the committee used when creating the draft calendars.

Number of student days: In Colorado, students must go to school at least 160 days unless the school district submits a waiver request to the state. We currently have 164 student days in LCSD, and one of the choices the committee made early in the process was to keep this number of days. This means parents can count on the same number of school days, and families can count on the same number of days when kids can get lunch and breakfast at school, for instance. This also means that cooks and bus drivers will have the same number of paid work days, which was important to us.

Number of teacher days and union agreements: In LCSD, we have two union agreements. So another constraint was that any draft calendar had to honor those agreements. The teacher union agreement, for example, says that teachers work 179 days. So that was another constraint for our draft calendars.

Alignment with CMC: We also have a strong partnership with CMC, and 50-60 of our high school students at any time are taking CMC classes, and we are paying their tuition. This means that our calendar has to align somewhat with CMC's in order to support this partnership. The biggest impact here is that, because CMC's semester ends at winter break, it is very important that our semester also end at winter break. Once year we tried something different and it was a very challenging for our high school students. So, if the constraint is that the LCSD semester has to end at winter break to align with CMC, this has an impact on when the school year starts. Some of our stakeholders would like us to start school after Labor Day, however we can't start after Labor Day and also finish the semester by winter break. So that means that starting before Labor Day became another constraint.

Budget: Because of the very tight school funding situation in Colorado, LCSD must prioritize its budget dollars very carefully and strategically. Without guaranteed new funding to pay for new programs, it was important for the draft calendars to be "budget neutral," or to not cost anything additional. When the calendar is finalized, LCSD will work with community partners, as we have always done, to try to find creative ways to provide enriching programs when students are not in school.

Length of the school day and transportation: Currently, LCSD transports all K-12 students to school on one set of bus routes in the morning, and again on one set of bus routes in the afternoon. This means that all of our schools start around 8am and end around 3:30pm. Running the busses in this way is cost effective as we do one run in the morning and one run in the afternoon. It also ensures that our youngest students are arriving home at the same time as their older siblings, who often have child care duties. Because one constraint of the calendar was not to increase costs, this also meant not

increasing transportation costs. Keeping all schools on the same bus schedules therefore meant not changing the start and end times for any of our schools significantly.

Athletics: The calendar has a big impact on our athletic teams. So we had to be sure that any calendar would support our team schedules and our participation in CHSAA.

What does the research say about which school calendars are the best?

Another question we asked ourselves is what the research has to say about different school calendar models. We convened a research subcommittee to look into different calendar models, such as a 4-day week or extended year, and summarize the pros and cons that the research discovered. Fundamentally, what did the research tell us? It told us that there is no silver bullet. There are communities that have seen improved student achievement by extending the school year. There are communities that have increased teacher retention by going to a four-day school week. But the bottom line is that the most important thing is to have a school calendar that works for your community--rather than trying to find a magic solution.

What were the results of the initial calendar survey the committee conducted about the current school calendar?

Here were some of the key takeaways from our initial survey, conducted in November 2018:

- The vast majority of respondents (90% of 250 or so) rated their satisfaction with the current calendar as a 3, 4 or 5 out of 5, with 5 being very satisfied. There was no overwhelming hostility to the current calendar, or to exploring change.
- Stakeholders expressed a need for consistency in the calendar week to week.
- Parents said that they don't use all the opportunities currently available for their students on days off from school.
- More respondents seemed open to adding more school in June than in August.
- Some respondents liked the idea of more breaks (4 day weeks and/or longer breaks)