



ISSUE BRIEF

L.O.C.A.L. Leave Our Calendar Authority Local

First and foremost, a school calendar should address student learning and instruction. Preserving school-based flexibility to design school calendars is essential to accommodate student learning needs, local education goals and each communities' unique preferences. When schools must comply with a forced school start and/or end date, it causes educational, legal and financial consequences and causes disruption to local communities. Setting a school calendar impacts far more than the summer camp and tourism industries.

Student Instructional Days

For years, Alabama had the shortest school year in the nation with 175 student instructional days. In 2006, the state lengthened the school year to 180 days to meet the national average.

Alabama and the U.S. are still behind the international average of 200 student instructional days a year. With 20 fewer days – Alabama students graduate with 260 days less learning than their international peers during their K-12 career.

Pilot “Longer” Summer

The tourism and summer camp industry repeatedly pushed the argument that a longer summer would bring millions more in revenue to the state. After years of battling the issue, in 2012 the Alabama Legislature enacted a two-year pilot program. It prohibited starting school before mid-August or ending after Memorial Day for two years and allowed the 180-day requirement to be met with 1,080 instructional hours.

Schools had to make choices. Some eliminated or shortened breaks their students, parents and employees favored. A few added 20 minutes to each school day to shave off days of instruction and still meet 1,080 hours, a plan that had significant personnel and financial implications. Communities also struggled to accommodate unique needs such as

aligning with local college/university schedules or regional events (i.e. Mardi Gras, Talladega races).

Pilot Program Fail

An independent review showed no increase in tourism dollars resulted from the pilot study despite lofty projections. The finding removed any financial argument to force schools statewide to follow the same calendar. Meanwhile, communities voiced their objections to mandated calendars. The pilot program ended, the law sunset and local authority for calendars prevailed.

L.O.C.A.L is Smart for Students

- Some children do not have exposure to basic learning over the summer break, particularly subject to family economic circumstances.
- While studies vary, the long summers appear to have the largest negative impact on our most vulnerable students.
- Longer summers also deprive students who benefit from much-needed services such as school meal programs and after-school care.

L.O.C.A.L is Smart for Business

- Alabama mitigated the summer impact **at no cost** by incorporating periodic breaks throughout the school year.
- Cutting school days would force the state to forego a portion of its federal reimbursement for school breakfast and lunch programs.
- The state-required teacher contract year must include 187 workdays for teachers, regardless of the number of student days.
- Support workers' hourly pay cannot be cut because of changes to the calendar. A longer school day translates to overtime pay.
- Summer camp/tourism interests ought not dictate decisions about student instruction, including setting the school calendar.

Oppose a school calendar mandate

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