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Uniform School Calendars

Last year the Vermont State Legislature passed a law requiring the adoption of a uniform school calendar for the state. The idea was given to a committee, which eventually decided that a uniform statewide calendar did not make sense for Vermont due to widespread resistance to the idea.¹

State control over public school calendars is an issue for legislators, administrators, and parents all across the country. The range in state control over the calendars varies from state to state depending primarily on geographic location and the needs of the communities. Only one state – Hawaii – has a state-wide uniform school calendar. More commonly, states require coordinated start dates, but do not require completely uniform calendars. Outside of Hawaii, the highest level of government at which uniform calendars are required is the school district level.

Hawaii

Only one state so far has a universal statewide calendar for public schools, excluding charter and multi-track schools. The state legislature passed the law creating the statewide calendar in 2004, and it went into effect for the 2006-2007 school year.² The Hawaii State Department of Education adopted the single school calendar because they felt the multiple school calendars were inconsistent and created a hassle. The calendar was selected by recommendations from surveys given to administrators, staff, teachers, students, and parents.³

States with a Statewide School Year Start Date:

Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Michigan, Wisconsin, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida set starting dates for their schools. The majority of the states that have adopted uniform start dates for the school year are from the South, with the extreme heat of the summer months affecting their decisions. The start dates of

¹ Porter, Louise. "Statewide School Calendar Goes Back to Legislators," *The Rutland Herald*. January 15, 2008. Retrieved March 24, 2008 from <http://rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080115/NEWS03/801150330/1041/LEGISLATU RE>

² Hawaii State Department of Education. "Calendars 2006-2007," retrieved March 19, 2008 from <http://doe.k12.hi.us/calendars0607/index.htm>.

³ Hawaii State Department of Education. "Single School Calendar," retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://reach.k12.hi.us/streamlining/singlecalendar/SingleSchoolCalendar.pdf>.

each state are often set during the last week of August or anytime after Labor Day. North Carolina and West Virginia also have regulations on when the school year may end.⁴

States Debating Uniform Start Dates: Connecticut, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Alabama

- In Connecticut, State Senator Thomas Gaffey, Chair of the Education Committee wishes to have “greater consistency” in the calendar for the state, and his committee has proposed a uniform start date.⁵
- In Tennessee, there are currently no legislative initiatives either for or against uniform start dates, but there is a heated debate. Some state representatives have urged for uniform start dates but no formal proposals have been made.
- Kentucky is also flirting with the idea, and has made an initial step towards legislation with a bill to preserve summer vacation, which effectively mandates similar school start dates across the state. So far, it has only passed in the House.⁶
- Like Kentucky, Indiana has recently introduced legislation to regulate a uniform start date throughout the state, and it is currently in committee.⁷
- Alabama has introduced a similar bill to Kentucky’s, which is now in committee, but the Alabama Association of School Superintendents opposes it.⁸

Uniform District-Wide School Calendars

Some states have chosen to require that uniform school calendars be set at the school district level. These states include Maine⁹ and New Hampshire¹⁰, as well as Kentucky¹¹, Louisiana¹²,

⁴ Save Tennessee Summers. “State School Start Date Laws,” retrieved March 17, 2008 from <http://savetennesseesummers.org/State%20School%20Start%20Date%20Laws.pdf>; Cook, Glen, “Calendar Wars,” *American School Board Journal*, January, 205: 24-27, retrieved March 17, 2008 from <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=3&hid=9&sid=da245b7b-0cf8-44ee-8c85-963a6852eed1%40sessionmgr3>; Lexington Herald-Leader, “Bill Promotes Later Start to School Year,” retrieved March 8, 2008 from <http://www.kentucky.com/news/state/story/326350.html>.

⁵ Connecticut State Democrats, “Gaffe Pledges Push for Uniform Statewide School Calendar to Include Mandated Post-Labor Day Start,” retrieved March 19, 2007 from <http://www.senatedems.ct.gov/pr/gaffey-070828.html>.

⁶ Kentucky Legislature, “SB 134,” retrieved March 17, 2008 from <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/08RS/sb134.htm>.

⁷ Indiana General Assembly, “SB 38,” Retrieved March 19, 2008 from <http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2008/IN/IN0038.1.html>.

⁸ Alabama Association of School Superintendents, “Legislative Platform,” retrieved March 19, 2008 from http://www.ssaonline.org/legislative_platform.html.

⁹ Maine State Legislature. “Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A: Education; Part 3: Elementary and Secondary Education; Chapter 209: School Days, Holidays, Special Observances; Section 4801. School Days,” Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec4801.html>.

¹⁰ New Hampshire General Court. “Title XV Education; Chapter 194-C; School Administrative Units,” retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xv/194-c/194-c-mrg.htm>.

¹¹ Kentucky Department of Education. “School Calendar,” Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Finance+and+Funding/School+Finance/Attendance+Data/School+Calendar.htm>.

Michigan¹³, Minnesota¹⁴, Missouri¹⁵, Montana¹⁶, and North Carolina¹⁷. The details differ somewhat between these states, though most states also provide some general parameters for an acceptable number of school days in a year and/or parameters for acceptable district school calendar start and/or end dates.

Maine is unique among the states listed in that its school calendar law emphasizes the alignment of calendars between regional schools and the local technical/vocational centers to which they send students. A degree of flexibility is built into this requirement, with each district allowed to have up to nine non-uniform instructional days per year.¹⁸

In Vermont, an enforced requirement for uniform calendars at a district or regional level could rectify the problem of children within the same school system having differing school schedules, while also providing a degree of local flexibility and control.

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Disclaimer: This report has been compiled by undergraduate students at the University of Vermont under the supervision of Professor Anthony Gierzynski. The material contained in the report does not reflect the official policy of the University of Vermont.

¹²Louisiana Department of Education. "School Calendar (SPC) System User's Guide for Reporting School Year 2007-2008," retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/2602.pdf>.

¹³ Michigan Legislature. "Act No. 101; Public Acts of 2007," retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2007-2008/publicact/htm/2007-PA-0101.htm>.

¹⁴ Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes. "2007 Minnesota Statutes; Chapter 120A. Education Code; Compulsory Attendance," retrieved March 19, 2008, from https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=120A&view=chapter&year=2007&keyword_type=exact&keyword=school+calendar#stat.120A.41.0.

¹⁵ Missouri General Assembly. "Chapter 171; School Operations; Section 171.031," retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/c100-199/1710000031.htm>.

¹⁶ Montana Code Annotated. "20-1-302. School term, day, and week," retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/20/1/20-1-302.htm>.

¹⁷ Wilder, Mike. "School Board Seeks Calendar Control." *The Times News* Burlington, NC. 19 Mar. 2008. http://www.thetimesnews.com/articles/school_10997_article.html/calendar_students.html.

¹⁸ Maine State Legislature, 2008.