

Pros, Cons, Observations and Data Points of An Earlier Start Calendar

Pros, Observations, and Data Points:

After studying Mattawan's learning environment and achievement and proficiency scores, we found that two months showed significant points of concern in terms of teaching and learning. Those two months were October and February.

1. Student and staff attendance was the lowest during the months of October and February.
2. Student discipline was the highest, and overall student achievement took a significant dip in the months of October and February due to unexcused absences.
3. It was shared by one park manager that August is a difficult month for the students who reside there, with an increase in aggressive acts, property damage, and police calls.
4. All four buildings are working hard to close the gap between the bottom 30% of our students and the students achieving. Student fatigue during the school year was a concern shared by multiple staff members.
5. The pressure for our honors and AP students is very apparent. Breaks throughout the year would allow them an opportunity to reflect on past learning and prepare to go hard at it again after a break.

6. High School student's feedback reported that having breaks within the school year would help them become more effective and successful in the outcomes of their learning.
7. Teacher feedback reported that a break in October and February would be very beneficial in their own teacher fatigue, allowing them to reflect on previous teaching and better prepare for the next session with energy and enthusiasm.
8. Of our current 3rd grade students, 26% are non-proficient in reading. With the new state 3rd grade reading proficiency law, we need to begin working with our third graders as soon as possible, and provide learning opportunities during the breaks throughout the year. Having this revised early start calendar would allow us more control and accountability of our students.
9. Over 500 students are already on campus starting the beginning of August for sports and fine arts.
10. Starting before Labor Day would allow our students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch (19.1%) to shorten the time without consistent meals. As much as we would like to support their nutrition year-round, even getting them back to school earlier would be beneficial. Supporting them during the breaks throughout the year is more realistic in terms of funding and support personnel.
11. The opportunity to finish 1st semester before Winter Recess (aligned to second colleges and universities) would allow our

- students, staff, and families to have a break free of studying for exams, writing final papers, and getting work in before final grades.
12. Each of our buildings have received a “yellow” status, the bottom 30% of students who are not proficient in math, ELA, or science. We must look at all angles of our teaching and learning to provide every opportunity to create the best environment. Providing students a calendar that allows for times of hard work, then times of rest, and then back to hard work is worth looking at to see if we are able to close the gap of our achievers and students who are not proficient in one or more content areas.
 13. We are also developing partnerships with WMU and KVCC to offer our students multiple opportunities to be best prepared for their next journey, and talked about the proposal and if this would be beneficial to their success in these partnerships. Students, if they choose, can use these extra breaks to do more college level work within our partnerships.
 14. Mattawan will increase student opportunities with Middle College during the 2019-2020 school year so we can offer our students the opportunity to gain an associate degree by attending a 5th year. This adds to the rigor and opportunities and we want to better work with college schedules so the efforts of our students remain on learning.
 15. The students would still be in school 180 days a year, with 1,098 hours of instruction as the law requires.

Cons, Observations, and Data Points:

1. Shorter summer break by two weeks.
2. Students who have summer jobs would need to quit in time for school (if they typically work right up to the beginning of the school year).
3. Families who vacation in late August would need to schedule vacations earlier.
4. Daycares that are unable to work with this calendar might see loss of clients.
5. Daycares that charge whether clients are there or not may cost families more money for October and February breaks.
6. Families who are educators in other school districts would not have the same schedules.

Community Cons, Observations, and Data Points:

1. Students have losses after all breaks, increasing quantity of breaks will likely increase losses during the year and increase hours of review.
2. More school days during the peak daylight days will be hard for children to fall asleep when it's so light outside.
3. No long-term studies for benefits of early start performed in Michigan.
4. Utilities and maintenance costs will likely increase.