

## **Why Calendar 2.0 is Good for Students**

**By Jay Nichols**

There are two kinds of schools and two kinds of school systems – those that are improving and those that are not. In our state, the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA) is committed to the necessary leadership to make Vermont the home of a world-class public education system dedicated to fulfilling the aspirations of each student. To make this objective a reality for all children, we must think outside of the current public education construct. We cannot continue to operate the same old way and expect new and better results. What was successful in a nation that prepared most students for factory jobs over 100 years ago does not suffice for preparing our children for success in the ever-changing landscape of today's world economy.

As part of this movement to create structures to assist Vermont in developing a world-class education, the Champlain Valley Superintendents Association (CVSA) is proposing a new school calendar for the 2014-2015 school year, known as "Calendar 2.0." We believe, and research demonstrates, the current century-old school calendar has outlived its usefulness.

What we are proposing is not a radical change to the current school calendar. We are proposing that students continue their minimum of 175 student days and teachers continue to teach the same number of days. However, we are looking at blocking these days in a manner that is more consistent with what is known about student learning. School would start a week earlier than it does now and end a week or so later.

The essence of the calendar proposal is an alternating long block of traditional, whole-class instruction and a short break (or "intersession") designated for small group and individual intervention and enrichment. Teachers will carefully assess student mastery of key concepts presented during the regular seven-week learning blocks, and bring back students who are struggling during the intersessions, to provide them with extra learning time and support using local, state, and federal resources that have traditionally funded summer school programs and other interventions. Waiting until the end of the year to provide a student with necessary additional instruction and support is not very effective. The sooner a learning misconception or struggle is addressed, the greater likelihood of student success.

These intersession weeks will provide opportunities for schools, families, local agencies and organizations to form partnerships to develop learning and wellness activities for students and families. For example, in Franklin Northeast, we are exploring the idea of enrichment programs during many of the intersession weeks that would be available to all students, while also providing reteaching opportunities for any student who needs additional time and support. Also, families can choose to use these weeks to schedule vacation time, or create other family opportunities. In addition, many organizations that provide recreation and camp-type services are already positioning (in collaboration with CVSA membership) to schedule positive and enriching experiences during these intersession weeks.

Another benefit to the proposed calendar in terms of student learning is that schools could provide timely and consecutive days of professional learning opportunities for teachers during the

SCHOOL-YEAR WITHOUT REMOVING THEM FROM THE CLASSROOM. RESEARCH INDICATES THAT, ON AVERAGE, A STUDENT DURING THEIR K-12 EXPERIENCE HAS ABOUT ONE YEAR OF UNLICENSED SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS PROVIDING INSTRUCTION! THE REQUIREMENTS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHERS CONTINUE TO INCREASE. FINDING WAYS TO PROVIDE THIS TIME IN A COORDINATED MANNER DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR, WITHOUT REMOVING TEACHERS FROM THE CLASSROOM, WILL BE A MAJOR BENEFIT TO STUDENT LEARNING.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT WHEN THE CALENDAR COMMITTEE PROPOSED THIS CHANGE TO THE REST OF THE CYSR, WE DID SO BASED ON A LIST OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE FOCUSED ON STUDENT LEARNING, NOT ON ADULT PREFERENCE. CYSR IS ACTIVELY WORKING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO IMPLEMENT A SCHOOL CALENDAR THAT MEETS STUDENT LEARNING NEEDS BETTER THAN OUR CURRENT OBSOLETE MODEL.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT [SCHOOLCALENDAR2.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://SCHOOLCALENDAR2.BLOGSPOT.COM). IN ADDITION, THERE WILL BE REGIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS SCHEDULED ON THE FOLLOWING DATES: OCT. 2, 3, 9 AND 10 - TIMES AND LOCATIONS FOR THESE WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

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