

DATE: April 10, 2012
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Barriers to Schools Choosing a Modified Calendar (Trustee Request #169)
ORIGINATOR: Tanni Parker, Assistant Superintendent Student Learning Services
RESOURCE STAFF: N/A
REFERENCE: February 14, 2012 Board Meeting (Trustee MacKenzie)
[HCA.BP - Approval of the School Year Calendar](#)

ISSUE

The following information was requested: Re Report #14 – Barriers to Schools Choosing a Modified Calendar (Response to Trustee Request #151):

- In the past 10 years, which schools have applied for a modified calendar and which have been denied and what was the rationale for denial?
- Are there other reasons why schools might want a modified calendar not included in policy HCA.BP – Approval of the School Year Calendar?

BACKGROUND

February 14, 2012 Board Report - Barriers to Schools Choosing a Modified Calendar (Trustee Request #151) (Attachment I).

CURRENT SITUATION

Requests for modified calendars are not retained centrally past the year in which the requests were made.

For the 2011-2012 school year the following requests for a modified calendar were made and approved:

School	Considerations for Approval of Request
Edmonton Christian High School Sakinah Circle Talmud Torah	To allow for religious celebrations that did not align with the approved district calendar to ensure hours of instruction were met.
Braemar Donnan Vimy Ridge	To ensure specific programming.
M.E. LaZerte	Participation in an Alberta Education pilot

For the 2011-2012 school year the following requests were made and not approved:

School	Considerations for Denial of Request
Harry Ainlay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research evidence does not support claims of educational or academic gains resulting from a modified calendar. • Claims of a School Council in one school indicating that a calendar change would be appreciated by surrounding schools is speculative and unsupported. • The programming at the school was not of such a unique nature to warrant approval as is the case with current modified calendar approvals (i.e. religious holidays, specific programming such as Sports Alternative Program, extended year schooling for pregnant or parenting teens, High School Flexibility Pilot, etc.). • At the time of the request, the Board was engaged in discussions regarding modified school calendars and it was best to consider Board direction prior to approval of one case.
Queen Elizabeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research evidence does not support claims of educational or academic gains resulting from a modified calendar. • The programming at the school was not of such a unique nature to warrant approval as is the case with current modified calendar approvals (i.e. religious holidays, specific programming such as Sports Alternative Program, extended year schooling for pregnant or parenting teens, High School Flexibility Pilot, etc.). • The indicated rationale that students can catch up on work during a fall break is an unsupported aspiration. • At the time of the request, the Board was engaged in discussions regarding modified school calendars and it was best to consider Board direction prior to approval of one case.

No school has formally requested a modified school calendar for any other reason than those outlined in the above that were either approved or denied.

KEY POINTS

The policy, HCA.BP – Approval of the School Year Calendar, does not provide any information on rationale for schools wanting a modified calendar. The policy outlines and defines terms and provides the authority for the Superintendent to grant approval of modified calendars on a yearly basis.

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I February 14, 2012 Board Report – Barriers to Schools Choosing a Modified Calendar (Trustee Request #151)

TP:ja

DATE: February 14, 2012

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Barriers to Schools Choosing a Modified Calendar (Trustee Request #151)

ORIGINATOR: Tanni Parker, Assistant Superintendent Student Learning Services

RESOURCE STAFF: N/A

REFERENCE: December 13, 2011 Board Meeting (Trustee MacKenzie)
[HCA.BP - Approval of the School Year Calendar](#)

ISSUE

The following information was requested: What barriers are there to schools choosing and being granted a modified calendar? Are there steps the Board could take to reduce these barriers?

BACKGROUND

Board Policy HCA:BP - Approval of the School Year Calendar outlines the process for approval of the district calendar. The policy states the belief that “A standard calendar allows the Board to more easily undertake its responsibility to ensure that all students in Edmonton Public Schools have available to them as a minimum the amount of instructional time mandated by the Minister of Education and communicated in the Guide to Education...Should circumstances arise at a school where the approved calendar does not meet the school’s needs, the Superintendent of Schools is given the authority to modify the school calendar for that school on an annual basis.”

CURRENT SITUATION

A modified calendar alters the startup date of a school and the timing and duration of breaks in a school. Currently, criteria for approval of a modified calendar falls into three broad categories:

1. faith based religious programs, whose religious celebrations do not align with that of the approved calendar,
2. schools with programming and programs with unique needs that can be met through a modified calendar (i.e., Braemar, Vimy Ridge Academy), and
3. schools that have been approved for a pilot due to a programming change at the site (e.g., M.E. LaZerte and the High School Flexibility Project).

There are a number of local and District factors that need to be considered prior to granting a modified calendar:

1. In December 2011, the Board moved to not proceed with moving to a district-wide change to the calendar which would have had students arriving to school earlier in the fall and then having a one week break in November.
2. Consideration is also given to the impact that a modified calendar would have on collective agreements, student transportation and the District’s ability to support staff.
3. Parent and stakeholder support is also considered when granting a modified calendar.

In some circumstances, the Superintendent grants a modified work week to a school or group of schools. As the school continues to operate the same number of days on the same schedule as the approved calendar; it is not considered a modified calendar. Considerations for these exceptions would include the plan for the modified week and associated measures as well as considerations for student safety and parent commitment to the change in weekly structure.

The barriers, as identified in the request for information, are related to the multiple administrative considerations that are examined prior to the Superintendent approving a request for a modified calendar. Board Policy HCA.BP - Approval of the School Year Calendar provides clear direction to the Superintendent in this regard. Should the Board consider these as barriers, it may wish to consider a policy change to more appropriately reflect the Board's desire in this regard.

KEY POINTS

- Currently, criteria for approval of a modified calendar falls into three broad categories: faith based religious programs, schools with programming and programs with unique needs, and schools that have been approved for a pilot due to a programming change at the site.
- In December 2011, the Board moved to not proceed with moving to a district-wide change to the calendar which would have had students arriving to school earlier in the fall and then receiving and a one week break in November.
- Consideration is given to the impact that a modified calendar would have on collective agreements, student transportation and the District's ability to support staff.
- At this time, steps that the Board could take to remove barriers would require a policy change.

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

N/A

TP:ja