

**DATE:** November 29, 2011

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Feedback Received Regarding Modified District Calendar (Trustee Request #86)

**ORIGINATOR:** Tanni Parker, Assistant Superintendent

**RESOURCE STAFF:** John Macnab, Bruce Cline, Jan Favel, Diane Brunton, Cory Sinclair

**REFERENCE:** April 26, 2011 Board Meeting (Trustee Shipka)

---

**ISSUE**

The following information was requested: Seek feedback from staff, parents and the community about a district school calendar that offers a start date of the Monday prior to Labour Day and includes a one-week break in November and that a summary of the feedback come to public Board by the end of November, if possible.

**BACKGROUND**

For the past 10 years (2002-2003 school year to present) Edmonton Public Schools students on the standard calendar have begun instruction in September of each year. In five of these years, instruction began before Labour Day, and in five years it began after Labour Day. Apart from schools on a modified calendar, there have been no instructional days in August during this time.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

Parents, staff, students and community were given the opportunity to respond to a survey regarding the possibility of a fall break in Edmonton Public Schools. In total, 13,821 valid responses were given. Approximately 1,900 were returned on paper, with the remainder coming from the online survey.

The overall result was 46.9% opposed to the proposal, 45.1% in favour, and 8.0% undecided.

Value	Frequency	Percent
No	6,476	46.9%
Yes	6,233	45.1%
Undecided	1,112	8.0%
Total	13,821	100%

## 1. Are you a member of the Edmonton community?

Approximately 92% of all respondents were residents of Edmonton, with 8% from elsewhere. Non-residents were more in favour of the proposal than residents.

	Yes	No	Undecided
Edmonton Residents	44.4%	48.0%	7.7%
Not an Edmonton Resident	53.5%	34.0%	12.5%

## 2. Are you an employee of Edmonton Public Schools?

Edmonton Public School Board employees were in favour of the proposal, with 60% support; non-employees were 40% in favor.

	Yes	No	Undecided
EPSB Employee	60.1%	32.1%	7.7%
Non EPSB Employee	39.9%	51.9%	8.1%

## 3. Are you a student in Edmonton Public Schools?

Amongst students, older students were more in favour than younger students.

School Level	Yes	No	Undecided
Elementary	37.0%	57.4%	5.6%
Junior High	40.4%	52.4%	7.2%
High School	50.3%	45.8%	3.9%

## 4. Are you the parent or guardian of a student attending Edmonton Public Schools?

Parents and guardians of EPSB students were 39% in favour of the proposal.

Do you have a child in EPSB?	Yes	No	Undecided
Yes	39.0%	52.4%	8.7%
No	42.7%	48.6%	8.7%

## 5. Please write the first 3 characters of your home postal code \_\_ \_\_ \_\_.

This information was required to see if there were geographic trends in the city.

6. Are you in favour of Edmonton Public Schools beginning instruction one week early and having a one week recess in November?

Parents and guardians of junior high and high school students were more in favour of the proposal than parents and guardians of elementary students.

Level of Child	Yes	No	Undecided
Elementary	36.6%	56.1%	7.3%
Junior High	40.8%	52.9%	6.3%
High School	40.8%	52.9%	6.3%

7. Please provide any comments you have regarding this proposal.

### Written Comments

Respondent comments fell into a small number of categories. On all sides, similar issues emerged. Some believed that the proposal would support student and staff wellness; others thought that the status quo is more supportive of wellness. Some thought the proposal would support student achievement; others thought that the break would disrupt student learning. Many non-educational issues came to the fore. Weather conditions in the summer vs. the fall were frequently cited. Some were concerned with conflicts with non-school activities, such as sports and camps. Some people said that a fall break would increase family time together; others were concerned that they would have less time as a family.

Many were concerned that a modified calendar would result in financial hardship as a result of child care expenses.

Finally, respondents expressed frustration over not being aware of the purpose of the proposed calendar change.

The following are sample comments:

- I believe students and teachers need a much deserved break by Nov. Once the school year begins, it is relentless. It would be beneficial for report cards and parent/teacher interviews to be complete, district wide, BEFORE this break to ensure that teachers do not use any more of their personal time for school work.*
- It would give us time to spend with my family when my dad is not busy.*
- It generates too much interruption for student's learning before the December break. The November and December break are simply too close to each other.*
- Working parents stress enough trying to get childcare for their children already. This will just add to the stress. Also summer break families make vacation time for that and during that time period. Parents who work odd and long hours to take care of their families and allow their children have good schooling have to book off the vacation time and we do work up and save for the summer holidays. After the long break from school our children take a little to get back into that routine and as soon as they are back in a routine they are going on another break? How is that fair how can we teach the children properly?*

- *Edmonton summers are short enough. We live in a northern climate and should have breaks when the weather is warm.*
- *Nothing is stated as to why this is being proposed; I would like to see some evidence based research showing realized benefits to the students.*

**KEY POINTS**

- EPSB staff are more in favour of the proposal than are parents and guardians.
- Students in junior high and high school are more in favour than are elementary students.
- Overall, those opposed slightly outnumber those in favour.
- Concerns are academic, well-being and personal.
- Many were unsure of what goals are addressed by the proposal.

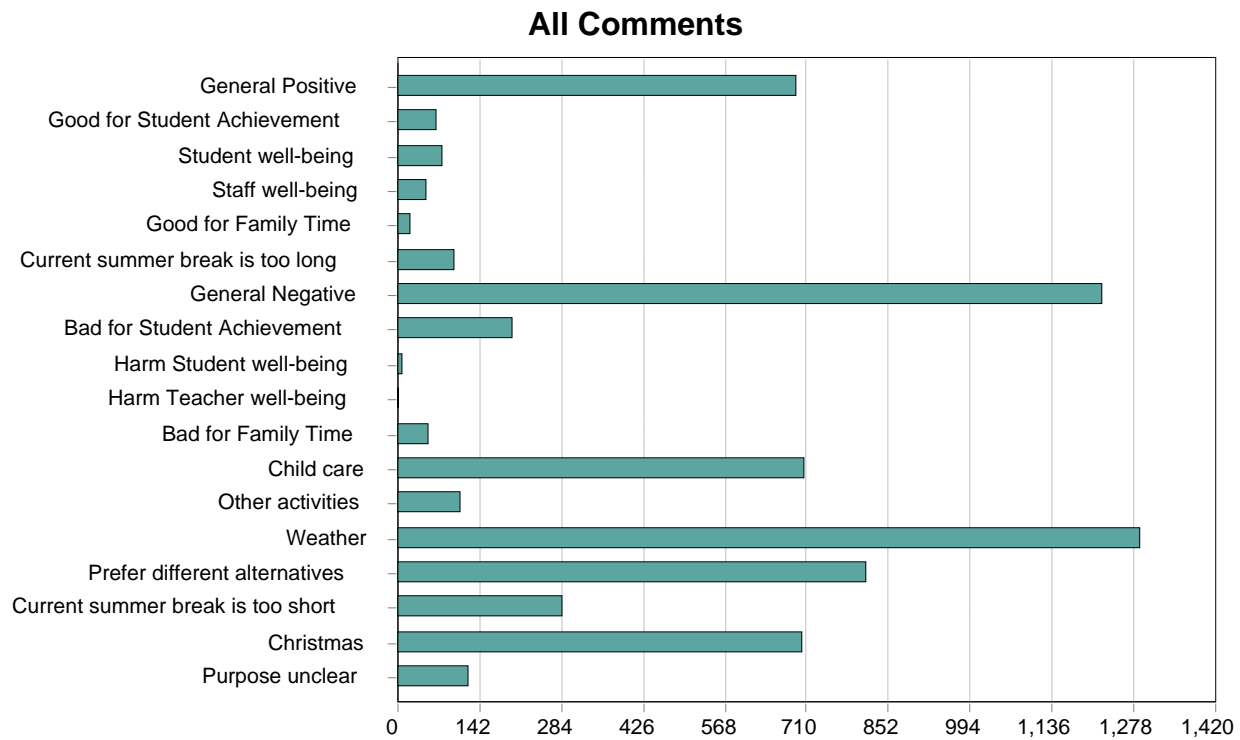
**ATTACHMENTS**

APPENDIX I                      Summary of Written Responses

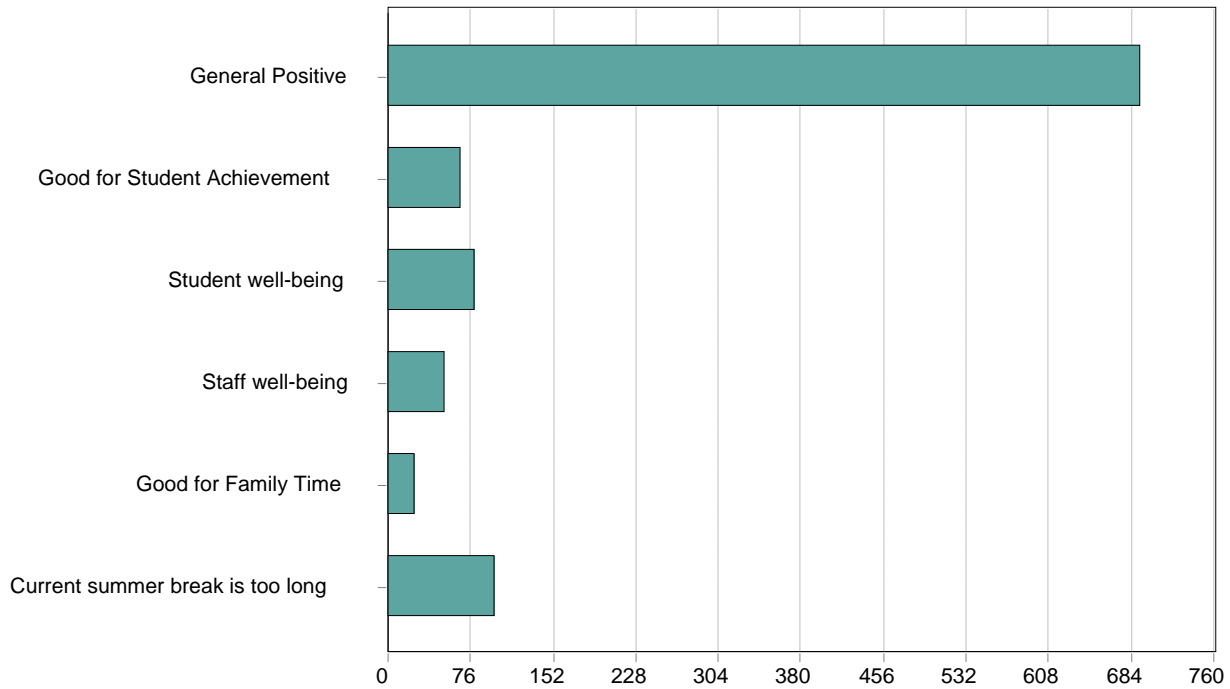
APPENDIX II                    The Possibility of a Fall Recess for Edmonton Public Schools Survey

JM:jf

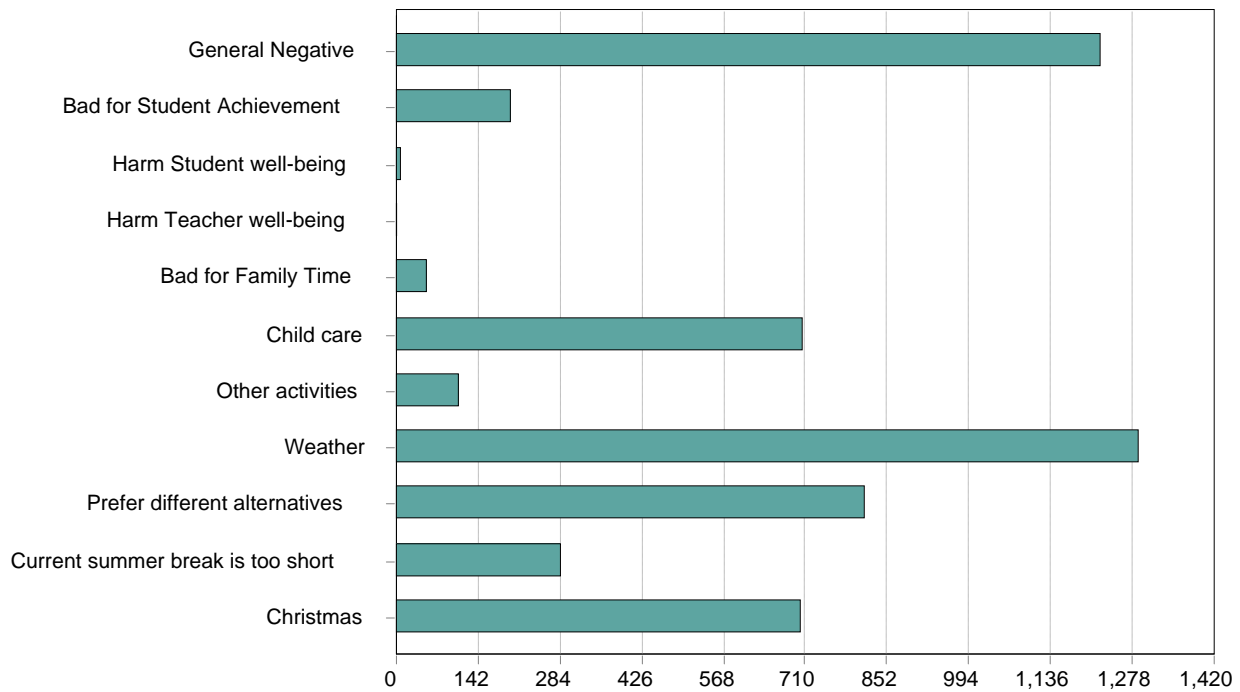
## Summary of Written Responses



### Comments in favour of the proposal



### Comments opposed to the proposal



### Survey - The Possibility of a Fall Recess for Edmonton Public Schools

The Board of Trustees is exploring the possibility of creating a one-week recess during the month of November in future school years. To make up for these days, school would begin one week earlier than usual. We would like to know what you think of this idea. The following calendar is an example of what impact the changes could have for the 2012-2013 school year.

If the District were to adopt a November break for the 2012-2013 school year, the following would occur:

- Students would begin school on August 27.
- First operational day for teachers would be August 24.
- Support staff would be in High Schools on August 13.
- Support staff would be in other schools on August 20.
- The fall recess would be during the week of November 12-16.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

1. Are you a member of the Edmonton community? (Circle One)  
       Yes                      No
2. Are you an employee of Edmonton Public Schools? (Circle One)  
       Yes                      No
3. Are you a student in Edmonton Public Schools? (Circle One)  
       Yes                      No
4. Are you the parent or guardian of a student attending Edmonton Public Schools? (Circle One)  
       Yes                      No
5. Please write the first 3 characters of your home postal code. \_\_ \_\_ \_\_
6. Are you in favour of Edmonton Public Schools beginning instruction one week early and having a one-week recess in November? (Circle One)  
       Yes                      No                      Undecided
7. Please provide any comments you have regarding this proposal.