

CUSD School Year Calendar FAQ

Q: Who is involved in setting the school year calendar for the District?

A: A Calendar Committee comprised of over 35 representatives from PTSA, elementary, middle and high school teachers and administrators, district administrators, CUEA, CSEA, Teamsters and students meets to develop a proposed school year calendar. The Committee analyzes data and discusses a variety of issues that factor into the development of the calendar. When the Committee has reached consensus on the calendar, it prepares a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for consideration and adoption. The draft 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 calendar recommendations will be submitted to the board in October 2016.

Q: Why was the school year calendar changed to start school before Labor Day?

A: The District believes the pre-Labor Day start will help to maximize classroom instructional time and provide more continuous blocks of school days as possible in order to reduce disruptions to the instructional program, and provide more continuous learning opportunities for all students. Furthermore, ending the semester before Winter Break gives students and teachers a less stressful break, free from homework, class projects and grading, or the need to study for exams.

Starting the school year before Labor Day brings CUSD in alignment with the majority of school districts in Orange County that have already adopted this change. The advantages and benefits in starting the school year in mid-to-late August are significant and the Committee believed it was appropriate to break from tradition in order to keep CUSD students competitive in their academic, athletic, college, and career pursuits.

Q: What are some of the advantages and benefits of starting the school year before Labor Day?

A: There are many advantages and benefits that factored into the Committee's recommendation to the Board of Trustees:

- Classroom instructional time will be maximized to provide more uninterrupted blocks of instructional days during the year for all students across all grade levels.
- Eliminates the after break crunch of building back instructional momentum, getting ready for finals and then taking mid-terms and final exams for middle and high school students.

- The end of the middle and high school first semester (including finals) will coincide with the start of Winter Break. All students and teachers (and their families) will have a true break from school between semesters.
- All students will have an opportunity to participate in a broader variety of summer programs that include sports, and college and career exploration sessions/camps. Many programs begin in June as a majority of schools in the nation now begin their years in August and end around Memorial Day.
- Gives AP/IB students three additional weeks of instruction before high stakes national testing and eliminates 2 to 3 weeks of AP homework over the summer. Eliminating summer homework may enable more students to participate in advanced coursework.
- This calendar is better aligned with Saddleback College for those students wishing to take college courses.
- Allows seniors to participate in both high school graduation and college orientations/summer school. Many college orientations begin in June.
- Requires fewer summertime practices for fall high school athletics.

Q: Why haven't parents been involved in discussions regarding proposed changes to the school year calendar?

A: The PTSA has served for years as the group representing CUSD parents on the Calendar Committee. This has maintained balanced representation on the committee among the different stakeholders and provided a single vehicle through which parent interests could be communicated during the review and development of the school year calendars. We are hearing that there is a desire for a broader level of input into decision-making processes within the District. This past year (2015-2016) we expanded the Calendar Committee to include additional parent and student representatives. We had three community forums to gather parent input, added an email link, and conducted a phone survey for additional opportunities for feedback and input.

Q: With the school year now starting 2-3 weeks earlier than before, what steps will be taken to ensure students are kept comfortable during the heat of August?

A: The safety and well-being of our students and staff are a top priority. We want to make sure they are as comfortable as possible to optimize learning. We believe the best place for our students, even in hot weather, is in the classroom where they are learning, supervised and being part of school activities. High temperatures can occur at any point throughout the school year. As a result, CUSD schools have a number of guidelines in place for instructional planning during hot weather. These guidelines include Instructional Program Modifications, Hot Weather

Guidelines, Activity Guidelines, a definition of heat related terms, Heat Illness Signs and Symptoms, and Guidelines for Fluid Replacement for Athletes.

CUSD conducted a study to determine the cost of installing air conditioning in all classrooms. The district would need \$12.5 million for this to occur.