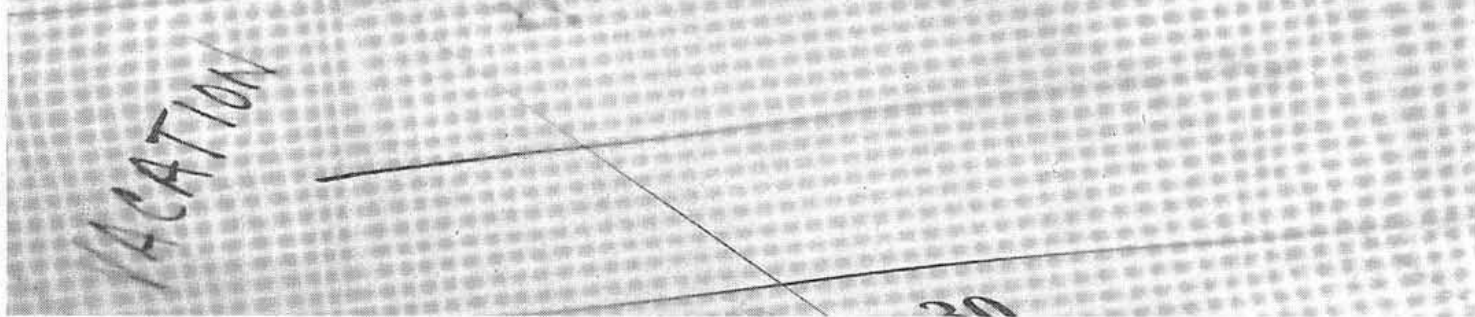


EDUCATION

Year-round schools Changing how children learn



Memorial Day weekend holds several different significances within the world of education. First, it is the last three-day weekend before the end of the traditional public school year. Second, it indicates the completion of an academic school year for a few private and charter schools. Lastly, it marks the countdown of one more month until the arrival of the much anticipated summer vacation.

There are thousands of schools in the United States that do not follow the traditional academic calendar. These institutions of education exist within the concept of year round education.

Spacing summer vacation into shorter breaks throughout the school year promotes the notion of more continuous learning for students. The dilemma of students forgetting information over the summer and needing extensive review in the fall is remedied by year round education.

Two primary designs for year round schooling are single-track and multi-track. Within a single-track system, both students and teachers follow a 45/15 calendar. School is in session for nine weeks, which equates to 45 days. Three weeks of vacation follow every 45-day cycle, meaning both students

and their teachers get a 15 day break. This rotation is repeated four times a year, upholding the required 180 days of school.

Multi-track designs also follow the 45/15 calendar, but students are divided into four groups, where only three groups are in school at one time. The fourth group begins when the others are on vacation. Within this system, enrollment can be increased while class size is reduced. Students are potentially in school for more than 180 days.

There are many challenges for teachers working in multi-track year-round schools. Organizing becomes tedious when trying to balance which class is doing what during a specific time.

Continuing their education is more difficult when there is less free time, due to a constant rotation of students being in session and on vacation. Basically, teachers do not necessarily get the same vacations as students in a multi-track arrangement. However, they are given an option as to whether or not

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they want to teach the inter-sessions or vacations. Opting to do so involves making more money by teaching enrichment classes.

Not all single and multi-track year round schools follow the descriptions here. A few of many differences are the ratio of in session and vacation days vary, in addition to the number of groups within a multi-track system.

Year round education is a change in how students learn, not what they learn. Studies from various school districts who implement year round schooling state the following benefits:

- ◆ increased student achievement
- ◆ improved attendance, attitude, and behavior
- ◆ expanded opportunities for reinforcement and enrichment
- ◆ minimized holiday learning loss
- ◆ improved motivation and morale
- ◆ reduced discipline referrals and truancy

Alleviation of stress levels as

a result of more frequency in vacations reduces chances for burnout by both teachers and students in year round education. Teachers don't have to worry about finding summer employment, but have the option to teach during inter-sessions if they so desire.

The concept of going to school all year is horrifying to some people. But look at it logically: after every 45 days, there is a 15-day vacation. Nine weeks is a long time without a break. However, three weeks provides ample opportunity for relaxation, rejuvenation and even some extensive traveling.

The state of California is currently the forerunner in highest numbers of year round education. There are over 1,500 schools that exist in 183 districts. The total enrollment in year rounds schools is 1,323,622, according to the National Association of Year Round Education.

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