The Pros and Cons of Year-Round Schools

Find out about families that swap a shorter summer break for learning time that's more continuous.



The very thought of sending kids to school year-round makes some parents cringe. They balk at the idea of kids attending schools with no summer break. They question the value of a continuous school year interspersed with several short breaks. While the schedule is definitely not what the majority of adults grew up with, it's not nearly as onerous as some people think. Rather than giving kids less time off, a year-round schedule offers the same 180 days of schooling as the traditional calendar, created long ago to ensure children were home to help their parents harvest crops.

* **What Exactly Is Year-Round Schooling?**  
  Kids in year-round schools attend classes for anywhere from six to nine weeks in a row, broken up by two- to four-week vacations. That, say some educators, keeps the learning process ongoing with minimal disruption. A Duke University study even suggested kids attending year-round schools are at a slight advantage, because they don't forget what they learned during the long summer break.  
    
  Schools in fast-growing areas transition to year-round schedules as a way to ease overcrowding. When that occurs, kids are placed on multi-tracks, and alternate tracking in and out of the school, a process that keeps the buildings in constant use.
* **The Multi-Schedule Juggle**  
  Frequent breaks are a mainstay of year-round schooling, but they aren't for everyone. Patricia McCracken, who grew up attending a year-round school in Virginia Beach, Virginia, says she found the two-week breaks, which occurred every six weeks at her school, to be disruptive. "It was really hard to get involved in the work because as soon as you geared up, you had to gear back down again."  
    
  Mary Brown, a middle-school teacher in Wake County (where three-week breaks occur every nine weeks), says she doesn't see that as a problem at her school. "Our schedule offers the kids a break from school right when they need it," she says. Earlier this year, after their first three-week break, she says, the kids seemed refreshed. "They didn't have the bored, glazed-over look of kids who had been in school for weeks on end with no break in sight."  
    
  Juggling different school schedules is one of the toughest problems parents of children in both year-round and traditional schools face. Many high schools don't employ a year-round calendar because of sports schedules. And teens want to be able to take [**summer jobs**](http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3746706).  
    
  The year-round schedule can make finding appropriate childcare a problem too. Because her mom was a teacher in a traditional school, McCracken says, "It meant my sister and I were basically latchkey kids for two or three years because it was impossible to find a babysitter for two weeks every six weeks." As year-round schooling becomes more common, however, communities are meeting the demand by offering track-out programs for kids who aren't in school.

http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/choosing-schools-programs/pros-and-cons-year-round-schools