**Kimberly Demucha Kalil** @KimberlyDeMuchaK

The Pros and Cons of Year-Round School

Not sure if year-round school is right for your kid? Study up on the pros and cons here.



Thinking year-round school might be right for your child, but not sure if he'll miss summer vacation? Before you make the decision, here's a look at what this school system looks like and the pros and cons of year-round school.  
  
**What Is Year-Round School?**  
Kids who attend a year-round school go to class the same number of days as students on a traditional school schedule. The only difference? A year-round school calendar is spread out more evenly over the year. Students get more frequent breaks, but their breaks are shorter and they don't get a traditional 10- to 12-week summer break.  
  
**The Pros**  
Eliminating any sort of long break from school can improve a child's academic achievement. Long summers are known to cause "summer slide," or the decline of academic skills and knowledge over the course of the extended vacation. The loss in learning varies across grade level, subject matter and family income, according to the [National Summer Learning Association](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research_Brief_04_-_Cooper.pdf), but it affects all children in some way.  
  
"If your child doesn't have a long break, it helps prevent summer learning loss," says [Carol Lloyd](http://www.greatschools.org/about/senior-management.page), the executive editor at Great Schools. "Summer learning loss is a major issue for kids. All children -- no matter their economic level -- experience a slide in math over the summer months." The slide varies for other subjects.  
  
Though it may seem fun, a summer break can often lead to boredom. Year-round school eliminates the need to fill 12 weeks of vacation with activities to keep your child interested and engaged. "If the American summer is not structured, it's almost too long," Lloyd says. "A lot of kids don't have enough to do during the summer -- they get bored."  
  
The shorter, more intense bursts of instruction along with more breaks is another pro of year-round school, says [Dr. Matthew Lynch](http://www.drmattlynch.com/about/), an education activist and the dean of the school of education, psychology, and interdisciplinary studies at Virginia Union University.  
  
**The Cons**  
The most obvious downside of year-round school is the effect it can have on families. Quality family time is important to the emotional and developmental well being of a child. Not having a summer break can make it difficult to schedule meaningful family time. "The major drawback is the assumed detriment to family structure," Lynch says. "American families have become accustomed to the traditional long summer vacation. Parents may find it difficult to schedule vacations and family reunions."  
  
Finding child care that works well with year-round school is often another challenge for parents. "Child care could also become a concern, particularly if multiple, shorter school vacations are scheduled throughout the year, at times when parents are working," Lynch says.  
  
In addition, the absence of a true summer can be a negative for all concerned. Summers off have long been a light at the end of the tunnel for teachers after an intense school year. "Every job comes with its share of headaches and, at one point or another, employees in all industries claim that they are burned out," Lynch says. He adds that this is of particular concern in education, because tired teachers can have a direct effect on their students.  
  
Finally, traditional summer vacations can provide unique learning opportunities you can't get in a classroom. Taking that time away from kids means they could miss out on art, culture and special adventures. "During summer break, kids are getting all sorts of experiences they wouldn't get in school," Lloyd says. "Summer is a great supplement to what your child is getting in school. If they're in year-round school your child will miss out on those experiences."  
  
**Is It Right for Your Family?**  
Deciding whether or not you send your child to year-round school is a very personal decision. If your child is old enough, see what he thinks about this new school plan. Visit the school in question, and consider any difficulties you may have securing child care. Weigh the pros and cons of year-round school, and ultimately go with what's best for your family.  
  
*Kimberly DeMucha Kalil is a freelance journalist and software consultant living in Southern Arizona with her husband and two children. Most days you can find her on*[*Twitter*](http://www.twitter.com/@kimberly_kalil)*.*

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