



News Release
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Parents Organize to Push Later School Start Date for Public Schools

As school districts throughout California are feeling the pinch of higher prices for most goods and services, a grassroots, parent coalition, Save California Summers, thinks pushing back the start of the school year to after Labor Day has merit and should be considered by the California Legislature.

Save California Summers says a later school start date is not only more family friendly, but would also save school districts money and would allow more tax dollars to go into California classrooms, academic programming and teacher salaries.

According to the National Climatic Data Center it is four times more costly to cool California schools in August than May. Eliminating August cooling days should save school districts money and reduce the energy needs for the entire state, says the organization.

A report in the Houston Chronicle showed Texas schools saw lower August electric bills after the state legislature mandated a school start date no earlier than the fourth Monday in August. Savings was seen during the period even though the cost of energy has skyrocketed during that time.

Tulsa, Oklahoma schools also saw a savings of almost \$500,000 by pushing back the start of the school year in 2003 from mid-August to post-Labor Day.

"Our teachers are spending their own money on school supplies for their classrooms. Students are enjoying fewer field trips and athletic and art program are being reduced -- not to mention many school districts have cut student busing services," said Carmichael mother of seven Kelly Rocha. "We owe it to our children and teachers to propose an academically balanced and fiscally responsible school calendar."

Save California Summers believe the non-traditional school year interferes with learning that takes place outside the classroom walls. Bloated school calendars, extended-year calendars and year-round school calendars limit the time teachers have to update skills and earn advanced degrees, reduce student working experiences and interfere with many families' ability to spend quality time together. Most importantly, supporters say, these calendar experiments provide no additional class time for our students and offer no proven results.

One in five states in the nation currently have laws governing the start of the school year. In the past two years, legislatures in Texas, Florida and South Carolina have all passed uniform school start date laws. Since the laws were enacted, each state has reported state standardized test scores on the rise and Texas and South Carolina saw ACT college entrance exam scores at all time highs.

"We know academic success comes from our dedicated teachers, hardworking students and our involved parents," said San Juan Unified School District mother Karen Vick. "But, this test data clearly shows that pushing back the school start date to late August or early September will not hurt our students academically and is one more reason to legislate a later, uniform school start date for California."

Parents in the group are currently conducting a statewide petition drive to show the legislature the wide-spread support for a later, uniform school start date. If you would like to show your support for a uniform start date or would like more information on the school start date debate, log onto the web site at www.SaveCaliforniaSummers.org.