

## **District committee recommends more traditional calendar**

Lake Havasu Unified has operated on two different calendars (year-round and traditional) for the past several years. Nautilus Elementary was the first school to go on a year-round schedule, with all other K-8 schools eventually following. It was thought the more frequent, shorter breaks of a year round calendar would give students less time to forget what they had learned so less time would be spent on review. During the breaks, the district would offer special classes to help those who needed it. It was believed that all this would lead to higher student achievement. The high school remained on a more traditional calendar.

A committee made up of district staff, governing board members, parents, community members, and city parks & recreation staff has spent months reviewing data and options. A community informational meeting was held at Thunderbolt Middle School on November 10 to present the committee's recommendation.

District director of educational services Dr. LeAnn Morrison explained some of the reasons behind the committee's choice to recommend a unified, **more traditional calendar** and to move away from year-round.

- No major academic gains seen under year-round.
- Student absence rates increasing.
- Difficult for parents with children on two different calendars.
- Difficult getting student records from other districts that are closed while we are in session.
- More breaks mean teachers must review 4 times a year rather than 2 to get students back up to speed.
- Problems performing some maintenance and cleaning tasks on buildings during shorter breaks.
- Some teacher job applicants actually deciding not to work here because they did not want to start work in July.
- During shorter breaks, more parents leaving children home alone.
- Enrollment down in special classes offered during breaks.
- Difficult finding teachers willing to teach classes during breaks.
- New interventions like [homework clubs](#) (which are not calendar based) are helping students. Jamaica Elementary principal Paula Levensailor says the homework club at her school meets 3 times a week and has 80-90 members.
- New assessment tools like [Galileo](#) help teachers with day to day evaluations of student achievement. We no longer have to wait for an annual test (like AIMS) to tell us how students are doing. Teaching becomes more effective without calendar changes.

The proposed calendar includes early release days every other Thursday so that school staff may collaborate, train, and learn new skills. The Lake Havasu City Parks and Recreation Department will offer after school programs for students on early release days. The proposed unified calendar will not become the official calendar of the district unless the governing board approves it, and the governing board will not vote on the proposed calendar until December.

[Proposed Calendar](#)

[Meeting handout](#)

[Calendar Comments from our Director of Educational Services](#)

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**2006 - 2007**  
**SCHOOL CALENDAR**  
**Lake Havasu Unified School District**  
**ADOPTED 12/13/05**

**August, 2006**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**August**

1,2,3,4	Inservice for Staff
7	First Day for Students
10,24	Early Release K-12

**January**

1	New Year's Day
2,3,4,5	Winter Break
8	School Resumes
11,25	Early Release K-12
15	Martin Luther King Day - No School (All Staff & Students)
24	End of 5th Attendance Period (100th Day)

**January, 2007**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

**September, 2006**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

**September**

1	End of 1st Attendance Period (20th Day)
4	Labor Day - No School
6	Student Progress Report
7,21	Early Release K-12

**February**

7	Student Progress Report
8,22	Early Release K-12
19	President's Day - No School
22	End of 6th Attendance Period (120th Day)

**February, 2007**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

**October, 2006**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

**October**

2	End of 2nd Attendance Period (40th Day)
5,19	Early Release K-12
5	End of 1st Quarter (43)
6	No School/Students - Parent/Teacher Conference
9,10,11,12,13	Fall Break
16	School Resumes

**March**

15,29	Early Release K-12
16	End of 3rd Quarter (48/136)
16	Early Release K-12 / Parent Teacher Conference
19,20,21,22,23	Spring Break
26	School Resumes
29	End of 7th Attendance Period (140th Day)

**March, 2007**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

**November, 2006**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

**November**

2,16	Early Release K-12
7	End of 3rd Attendance Period (60th Day)
10	Veterans Day - No School
15	Student Progress Report
22,23,24	Thanksgiving - No School

**April**

8	Easter
12,26	Early Release K-12
25	Student Progress Report
26	End of 8th Attendance Period (160th Day)

**April, 2007**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

**December, 2006**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

**December**

7,21	Early Release K-12
11	End of 4th Attendance Period (80th Day)
21	End of 1st Semester (45/88)
22	No School/Students - Inservice for Staff
25	Christmas Day
26,27,28,29	Winter Break

**May**

10,24	Early Release K-12/ Last Day for Students (GRADUATION)
24	End of 2nd Semester (44/180)
25	Last Day for Staff / Inservice
28	Memorial Day

**May, 2007**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

\*Early Release: 12:25 pm High School, 12:30 pm Daytona, 1:00 pm Elementary Schools, and 1:30 pm Thunderbolt  
 180 days - students  
 187 days - staff  
 7 full staff inservice/conference (1) days  
 2 Early Release - Parent Conferences  
 K-12 Early Release - 20 days

# Q & A



## LHUSD#1 Calendar: Year-Round or Traditional?

1. **Question #1:** Why did the school district go to a year-round calendar in the first place?
  - a. Because of high-stakes testing, district teachers wanted to find time to remediate those students who were behind instead of just moving on to the next topic. The intersessions provided by the year-round calendar created the time and space to do this. Nautilus Elementary School was the first school in the district to use a modified calendar, and their students showed improved academic scores, which Nautilus attributed to the year-round calendar.
2. **Question #2:** After K-8 tried year-round, whose idea was it to change the calendar?
  - a. Many parents in the district have children on two different calendars (because the high school remained on a traditional calendar). These parents have repeatedly asked the Governing Board to get the district on one calendar.
  - b. A district-wide calendar committee with representation from each school, parents, and the community was formed this year to study the issue.
3. **Question #3:** What has the calendar committee concluded?
  - a. To most representatives' surprise, each school recommended that the district return to a traditional calendar. The schools were unanimous to support the committee's recommendation.
4. **Question #4:** What led the committee to this conclusion?
  - a. Parents have not taken advantage of intersession.
  - b. Student absenteeism has increased.
  - c. It has been difficult to hire qualified teachers who are able to arrive in July for the beginning of the school year.
  - d. Many new students from other districts enroll into our district as transfer students in late August and after Labor Day when school would be starting in their districts. These new students, having missed the beginning of school, are already far behind. Starting the school year in July only makes the problem worse. Schools have found other ways to assess and remediate.

## **Early Release Topics**

- Differentiated instruction
- Curriculum mapping
- Curriculum alignment
- Intra-team planning for across-curriculum projects
- 6 traits of writing
- Reading strategies that can be incorporated across the curriculum
- Departmental meetings
- Incorporating 6 trait essays across the curriculum
- Galileo
- Assessment results
- Common planning time to collaborate on lesson planning, review assessment data, create formative assessments, and share ideas
- Meeting with achievement teacher following each benchmark to evaluate student learning on essential standards
- AIMS data analysis
- DIBELS
- ELL
- SEI strategies
- Special Education
- ASSET and other web based instructional assistance
- Accelerated Math
- Accelerated Reading
- Technology
- Health and safety
- Child abuse
- Reading strategies for struggling readers
- Multiple intelligence and learning styles
- Writers workshop and publishing student work
- SST procedures
- Standards based reporting
- LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling)
- Fluency building

- Vocabulary building
- Targeting hot standards
- Blood Borne Pathogens
- Sexual Harassment
- 301 Qualifications
- State Standards (updates)
- Textbook review
- Pilot programs
- District Emergency Plan
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

## **Interventions**

- Advisory period at the end of the day
- After school tutoring
- Remediation class
- Growing Scholars
- Homework Club
- 30 minute daily re-teach
- Grade level teachers meeting to identify strategies for individual students
- Grade level teachers collaborating and coordinating lesson plans for re-teach and enrichment
- Mandatory tutoring or remediation
- Readers Theater
- Morning tutoring
- Summer school
- Literacy coaches
- Intervention specialists
- Accelerated Reading
- Accelerated Math
- STAR assessments
- Review AIMS, DIBELS, Galileo data
- ELL intervention group
- ELL for families
- Principal's writing challenge to motivate student writing
- Birthday Book program to encourage personal reading

## The Changing Face of Education

In the last fifteen years education has seen a number of educational reforms, not the least of them being increased accountability and No Child Left Behind. How the brain works and how children learn has been studied and researched for decades. Now, partially due to computers, instant communication, and the internet, the research is being studied and findings are being published and distributed to every state agency and educational organization that is interested in maximizing student learning. Of course student learning doesn't start with the student; it starts with the teacher.

The United States Department of Education assembles and distributes all the latest findings on how children learn to read, write, perform math, and even acquire language skills. The state of Arizona hosts conferences and workshops for educators on everything from strategies for assisting ADHD student learning, student behavior interventions, and Special Education to core reading programs, instructional strategies for math that increase student engagement, and data analysis. At no time in the past have we as educators had so much expertise, information, and real time data available for our personal consumption as we do today.

Being the new Educational Services Director for the Lake Havasu Unified School District, I have been pleased with the number and quality of after hours training opportunities offered by the district. In my short tenure I have witnessed a truly dedicated district wide staff of teachers give up time with their families to attend after school and all day weekend training sessions for DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), Structured English Immersion, and 6 Traits of Writing. I have also observed these same teachers return to their schools and not be able to implement or share their learning due to the solitary nature of teaching.

Teachers teach—there is no time in their day to interact or collaborate with colleagues. They typically start the day on duty supervising students then transition into their classrooms to teach students. They end the day again on duty, in parent meetings, tutoring students, or grading papers. Other than lunch there is no place in the day for peer communication or planning. I've been told teachers have specials and planning time. I can say from experience (19 years in the classroom) that specials and planning time is just about enough time to pull together the material you need to reinforce the light bulb that just lit up for your class after the math lesson you just finished. As a teacher I never had time to talk to my peers and as a principal my staff was always on the run preparing for the lesson, parent meeting, or tutoring a student that needed extra assistance.

Have you ever heard someone say “When your child goes to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade make sure he gets Mr. X for his teacher.”? We as a school district have the ability to have more Mr. or Mrs. X's teaching our students if we have the time to offer quality professional development that is embedded in the work day. Excelling schools and districts nationwide are successful because they offer professional development as part of the regular work week. Teachers need time to collaborate by grade level/department, with grade levels above and

below theirs, with other departments, as a building, as a district, and with mentors. Early release days are the next step to providing the best possible learning environment and instruction for the students of Lake Havasu. The focus of early release days at successful districts is to increase the skills, knowledge, and abilities of those individuals in the educational profession. As an educator I want every child in this district to exceed the standards on the AIMS and as the Director of Educational Services for LHUSD I want every school to hold an excelling school label. While every child may not be able to exceed the standards they certainly can meet them. Is it possible for every school to be excelling? Absolutely. Vail School District outside of Tucson is on its way to accomplishing this feat—they currently have four excelling schools and four highly performing schools out of a total of ten schools—and other districts are well on their way to following suit. When you talk with them about how they are doing it they tell you that one key is weekly early releases for teacher in-services, team collaboration, and planning.

The proposed district calendar for next year contains weekly early release days because we want the children of Lake Havasu to exceed the standards and to do that our staff must have time to collaborate, train, and learn new skills. What will the early release Thursdays be used for? Study and implementation of state and federal mandates; training and implementing differentiated instruction; curriculum alignment and mapping in the core subjects; student intervention strategies; DIBELS and Galileo student data analysis; special education inclusion; and a multitude of topics too long to list. As educators we truly have students at the heart of every issue that we look at. The proposed calendar was developed by a group of professionals (district staff, district administration, parents, community) during a long four month process who kept students at the center of all discussions. The committee's work and commitment to excellence should be honored and supported. Thank you.

Dr. LeAnn Morrison  
Director of Educational Services  
Lake Havasu Unified School District #1