

DATE: June 7, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: 2023 – 2024 School Year Calendar

ORIGINATOR: Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE STAFF: Vicki de Haan, Bob Morter, Nancy Petersen

REFERENCE: [GCA.BP](#) – Approval of the School Year Calendar
[GCA.AR](#) – The School Year Calendar
[Education Act](#)
[Funding Manual for School Authorities 2021/22 School Year](#)

ISSUE

Section 60 of the *Education Act* states that:

“A board shall determine and make publicly available for each school year the days, dates and number of days of school operation.”

Additionally, *Board Policy GCA.BP – Approval of the School Year Calendar*, requires that the Board of Trustees approve calendars for two years following the current school year.

BACKGROUND

The school year calendar is designed with a number of requirements and considerations including provincial and federal employment legislation, Alberta Education requirements, our Division’s Board Policies and Administrative Regulations, and collective agreements with staff groups. These requirements need to be incorporated when designing a school year calendar that best supports the educational programming of the school Division.

Provincial and federal legislation lists a variety of holidays that need to be incorporated into the calendar, and are also required to be provided to some staff groups through collective agreements. These required holidays include: New Year’s Day, Alberta Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday, Labour Day, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Furthermore, provincial legislation identifies teachers’ convention and assigns the responsibility for these days to the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Alberta Education articulates the number of hours of instruction that students receive in a year and sets the diploma exam testing schedule. For the 2023-2024 school year, the diploma exam writings are; October 26 to November 8, January 9 to 30, April 4 to 16, June 11 to 26 and August 1 to 9. The Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate testing schedules are set by their respective organizations.

Division Administrative Regulation *GCA.AR – The School Year Calendar* requires a two-week winter recess inclusive of December 24 and January 2. Under the direction of the administrative regulation, the spring recess is to be five consecutive days beginning on the last Monday of March. Additionally, the calendar is designed to balance the two semesters in response to curriculum delivery and to align with the terms and conditions of the “Letter of Understanding #9 Pilot Project on Revised School Calendar” within the Alberta Teachers’ Association September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2020 collective agreement.

Between January 31 and February 10, 2020, an open-access opinion poll of families and staff was administered to gain feedback from stakeholders around the development of the calendar. This poll supported a number of changes to the school year calendar. These changes included additional professional learning days and, where needed, additional board-declared non-instructional days. The other significant feedback identified within the poll was that families preferred the clustering of non-instructional days versus the distribution of those days more broadly throughout the year. Feedback from the poll helped inform the development of the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year calendars.

As part of the approval of the pilot calendar in the spring of 2020, administration outlined a two-year evaluation plan of the calendar pilot. The evaluation was intended to engage families, staff, students and key community stakeholders around the concepts of wellness, access to professional development, opportunities for staff collaboration and the role of community partners on non-instructional days for students.

Spring of 2020 also saw the arrival of COVID-19 and its impact on school operations. For the past two school years students, families and staff have navigated sudden pivots to online learning, health mandated isolation requirements, staying home due to illness and significant health guidelines around how people interact. Within this disruptive and unpredictable context of the pandemic, it was not feasible to move ahead with the original evaluation plan for the calendar as it did not reasonably reflect the context of people’s daily lives during COVID-19.

Additionally, the Division has been approached by members of the community advocating for the inclusion of a number of specific holy days or days of significance in the Division’s calendar. The Board of Trustees is committed to exploring the incorporation of these days where feasible, with the goal of creating a more inclusive school year calendar. The dates under consideration are:

- Monday, September 25, 2023 – Yom Kippur
- Sunday, November 12, 2023 – Diwali/Bandi Choor Divas
- Sunday, February 10, 2024 – Lunar New Year
- Wednesday, April 10, 2024 – Eid al-Fitr
- Monday, June 17, 2024 – Eid al-Adha
- Friday, June 21, 2024 – National Indigenous Day/Summer Solstice

To support and inform the development of the school year calendar going forward, the Division surveyed stakeholders as part of this year’s annual Division Feedback Survey (DFS). The questions related to the school year calendar addressed some aspects from the 2020 pilot and asked various stakeholders questions to help inform changes to the calendar that would support the inclusion of additional days of significance in a more inclusive calendar. This consultation occurred recently in the spring of 2022 and has been considered in the design of the draft 2023-2024 school year calendar that is attached.

Feedback from the DFS indicated strong support for a calendar that would allow students and families to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to them. However, it should be noted that a majority of respondents did not support a calendar with days off in the middle of the week. This suggests that caution should be employed when setting midweek non-instructional days. The concept of clustering versus distributing breaks was also confirmed in the 2022 Division Feedback Survey with over 75 percent of respondents who had a preference indicating support for school breaks that happen less often but with more days grouped together. For a summary of DFS stakeholder feedback related to the calendar see Appendix I of this report.

The Policy Review Committee is reviewing and revising policies on the school year calendar and scheduling. This policy review may also impact how days of significance are recognized.

RELATED FACTS

Key points of the draft 2023-2024 School Year Calendar includes:

- The calendar is built around 178 instructional days;
- The start date for students is Tuesday, September 5, 2023; this aligns with a preference for school to start in the first week of September that was indicated in the 2022 Division Feedback Survey;
- The end date for students is Wednesday, June 26, 2024, aligning with the draft Alberta Education Diploma Exam schedule;
- Instructional days are balanced for first and second semesters;
- A breakdown of instructional days as follows:
 - Semester 1 - 16 Mondays, 19 Tuesdays, 19 Wednesdays, 18 Thursdays, 17 Fridays,
 - Semester 2 - 16 Mondays, 18 Tuesdays, 19 Wednesdays, 19 Thursdays, 17 Fridays.
- A November break for families of four days: one day in lieu for reporting, two Board declared non-instructional days and one professional development day.
- A May break of three days consists of: Victoria Day, one day in lieu for reporting and one Board declared non-instructional day.
- Eight Professional Development days distributed throughout the school year to support Division, school and individual teacher learning. The work of these days both benefit student learning, school-wide initiatives and address the goals of annual teacher Professional Growth Plans.
- The proposed calendar generally reflects clustering of days—the preferred approach indicated by family and staff in the open-access opinion poll administered from January 31 to February 10, 2020, and supported in the 2022 Division Feedback Survey.

RECOMMENDATION

That the 2023-2024 School Year Calendar as shown in Attachment I be approved.

OPTIONS

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. Approve the attached 2023-2024 School Year Calendar - Attachment I
2. Approve the attached 2023-2024 School Year Calendar with modifications.
3. Approve the attached 2023-2024 School Year Calendar - Attachment I, and delegate to administration the authority to amend the calendar should Alberta Education adjust the 2023-2024 Diploma Exam Schedule by removing April 10, 2024 and/or June 17, 2024 as a diploma exam date.

4. Approve the attached 2023-2024 School Year Calendar with modifications and delegate to administration the authority to amend the calendar should Alberta Education adjust the 2023-2024 Diploma Exam Schedule by removing April 10, 2024 and/or June 17, 2024 as a diploma exam date.

CONSIDERATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The attached calendar was developed in alignment with the various requirements outlined within the background section of this report. Currently, the calendar is designed around an annual figure for teachers' instructional duties of approximately 890 hours. In addition, the 2018-2020 collective agreement with the ATA specifies that teachers may not be assigned more than 1,800 minutes per week.

The proposed calendar maintains the 178 instructional days present in prior school year calendars. Building the calendar around the same number of days results in a greater consistency of school hours of operation from year-to-year, allowing schools for the most part to retain existing timetables for students and staff. This, in turn, assists parents with creating consistency of drop off and pick up times and contributes to efficient routing and scheduling of buses.

In the last few years, a request was made to the Board of Trustees, and in subsequent meetings with the administration, for the Division to organize seven specific days as non-instructional days in such a way as to avoid school on specified holidays or days of significance from a number of faiths and cultures. For the 2023-2024 school year, two of those dates fall on the weekend (Lunar New Year and Diwali), two have been proposed as non-instructional days (Yom Kippur and Summer Solstice), and three are instructional days (Winter Solstice, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha). Of these three, two have diploma exams scheduled on them and the last is the Winter Solstice, two days before the winter recess. Eid al-Fitr falls on April 10 during the April examinations and Eid al-Adha falls on June 17 during the June exams. Administration has written to Alberta Education requesting that the diploma exams scheduled for April 10 and June 17, 2024 be rescheduled. Should this change be made by Alberta Education, administration would reopen the 2023-2024 calendar to make this adjustment to reflect April 10 and June 17, 2024 as non-instructional days for students; this would require an adjustment elsewhere in the calendar, as the Division cannot simply add in one more non-instructional day. This revised calendar would be brought back to the Board of Trustees for either approval or information, depending on the option selected by the Board.

It is important to note that the *Education Act* provides that a student is excused from attending school on a day that is recognized by the student's religion as a religious holiday. To further support this crucial legislative provision, to respond to these requests, and to assist schools in creating more welcoming and inclusive schools for students and their families, the Division has created a Multi-Faith Calendar. Based on each specific school's population, school staff will use the calendar as a reference when planning school events, student exams and project deadlines. Schools are to avoid the scheduling of certain events/activities; such as parent-teacher interviews or school performances on these days or the day following. Division staff are able to request paid leave to observe the High Holy Days of their religion.

In addition, professional learning around the use of the Multi-Faith calendar is planned to further support schools. A Multi-Faith Calendar has been developed for the 2021-2022 school year and has been shared with all schools. The 2022-2023 Multi-Faith Calendar is in development and will be produced annually thereafter. This approach, along with the existing provision of the *Education Act* for parents to

excuse their children from school for religious reasons without academic penalty will create a more inclusive school environment and yet allow for operational needs of the Division.

As alluded to earlier, the Division included a number of questions related to the calendar in the 2022 Division Feedback Survey. A number of these questions related to the Fall, Winter, Spring and May breaks. For the majority of these questions, there was a significant number of responses that indicated “no preference”. Two findings seem to be of particular note. First, among individuals who indicated a preference, there was clear support for starting the Winter Recess on a Monday, the current practice. Regarding Spring Recess there was not a strong preference for the break beginning on the last Monday in March, as currently required in Administrative Regulation. A further question found greater support for Spring Recess being set around the Easter weekend. While the concept of a Spring Break that floats may have other challenges, for the calendar under consideration, it is not critical as the proposed Spring Recess, with the typical start date, already incorporates the Easter weekend.

NEXT STEPS

Following the approval of the calendar, it will be published on the Division website.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Draft 2023-2024 School Year Calendar

APPENDIX I 2022 Division Feedback Survey Results, as related to calendar

BM/al

2023–24 Division Calendar – DRAFT May 30, 2022

epsb.ca

AUGUST • 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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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 • 2023

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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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OCTOBER • 2023

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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

NOVEMBER • 2023

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19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

DECEMBER • 2023

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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JANUARY • 2024

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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

FEBRUARY • 2024

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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

MARCH • 2024

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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

APRIL • 2024

S	M	T	W	T	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				

MAY • 2024

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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

JUNE • 2024

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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

APPROVED HOLIDAYS

Labour Day	September 4
The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation	September 30
Thanksgiving	October 9
Remembrance Day	November 11
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26
Winter Break	Dec. 25–Jan. 5
New Year's Day	January 1
Family Day	February 19
Teachers' Convention	February 29–March 1
Spring Break	March 25–29
Good Friday	March 29
Easter Monday	April 1
Victoria Day	May 20

First Operational Day (No Students)	September 1
First Day of Classes	September 5
Last Day of Classes	June 26
Last Operational Day	June 27

LEGEND

- PUBLIC HOLIDAY
- PD DAY (NO STUDENTS)
- FIRST/LAST DAY OF CLASSES
- OPERATIONAL DAY (NO STUDENTS)
- TEACHERS' CONVENTION
- TEACHERS' DAY IN LIEU (NO TEACHERS OR STUDENTS)
- BOARD APPROVED NON-INSTRUCTIONAL DAY (NO TEACHERS OR STUDENTS)
- WINTER/SPRING BREAK

DATES OF SIGNIFICANCE

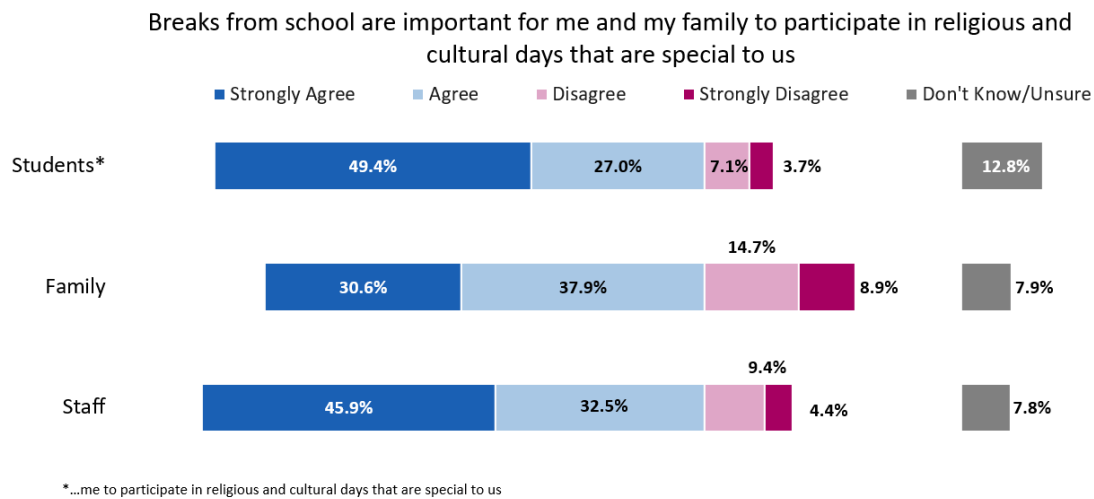
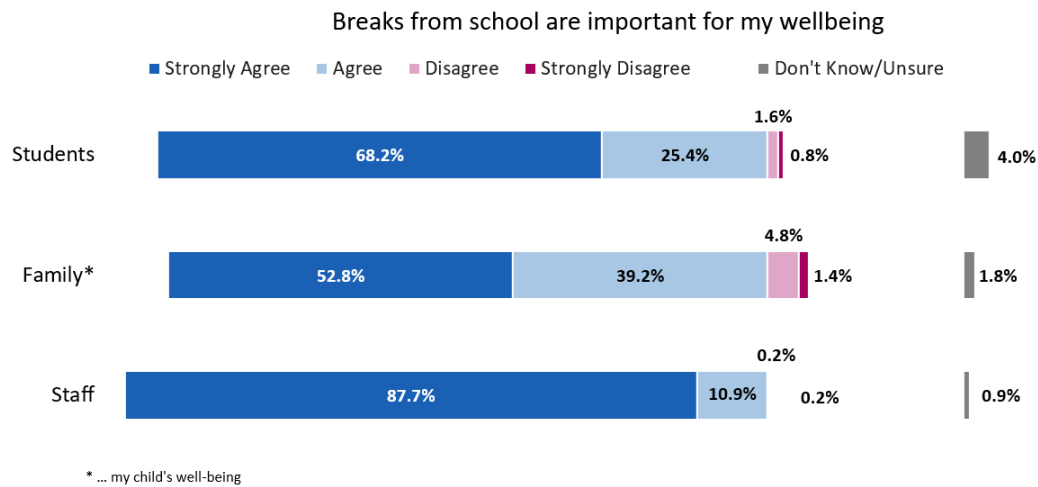
Yom Kippur	September 25
Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas	November 12
Lunar New Year	February 10
Eid al-Fitr	April 10
Eid al-Adha	June 17
Summer Solstice and National Aboriginal Day	June 21

2021-2022 DIVISION FEEDBACK SURVEY - CALENDAR QUESTIONS ANALYSIS

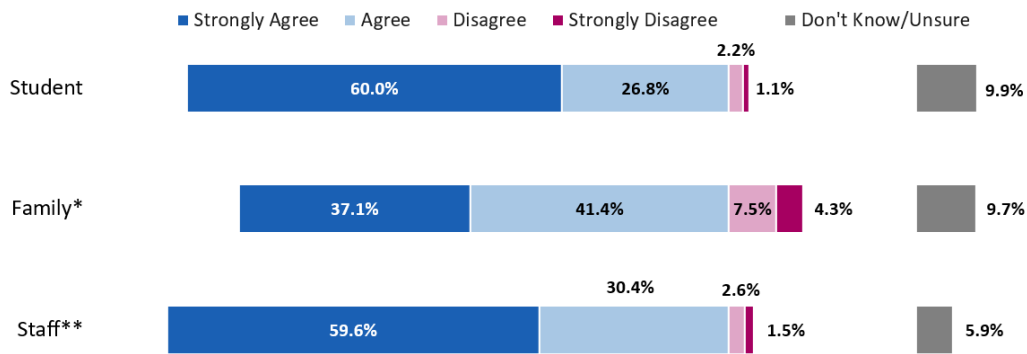
A series of closed-ended questions related to the EPSB school calendar were asked in the 2021-2022 Division Feedback Survey, open for stakeholders to complete from April 4 to May 6, 2022. Student, staff and family responses for each of these questions related to the EPSB school calendar are visualized below. Tables that detail the number of respondents for each question option are also included.

FIGURES

Cultural and Religious Days



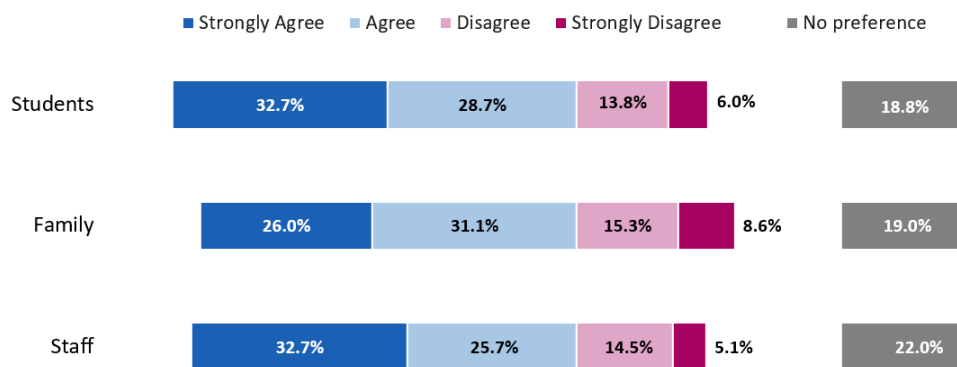
Breaks from school are important for my classmates to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to them



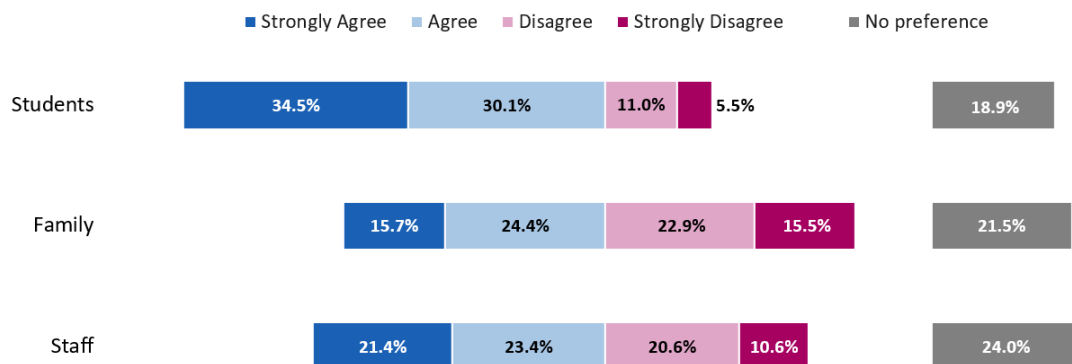
*...people from my school community to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to them

**...people from my school or work community to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to them

To include more cultural and religious holidays, I support school breaks that happen less often but with more days grouped together



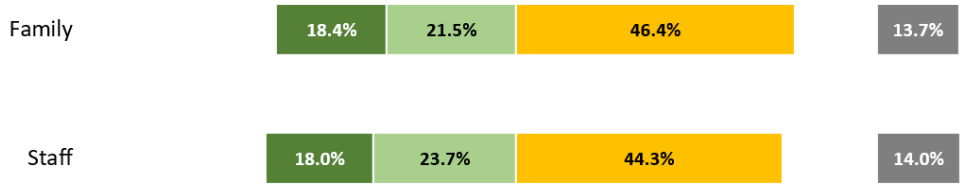
To include more cultural and religious holidays, I support school breaks that happen more often but with fewer days grouped together



School Start Date

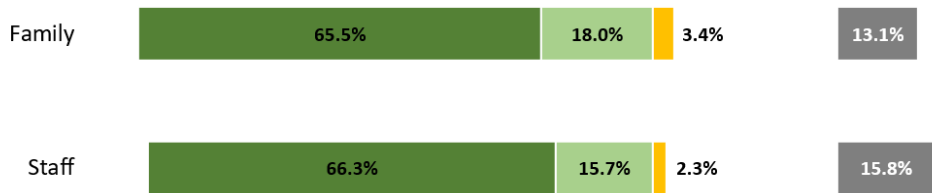
How supportive would you be if school started the last week of August?

■ Very supportive ■ Somewhat supportive ■ Not Supportive at All ■ No preference



How supportive would you be if school started the first week of September?

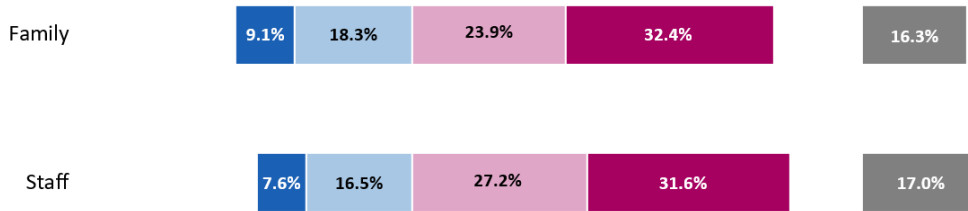
■ Very supportive ■ Somewhat supportive ■ Not Supportive at All ■ No preference



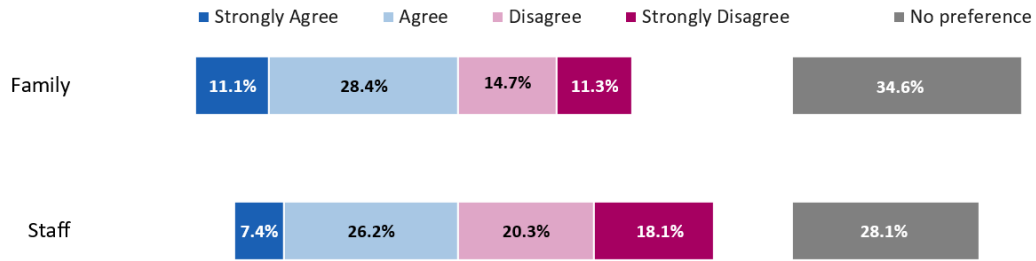
Potential School Calendar Adjustments

Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of a school calendar with days off in the middle of the week

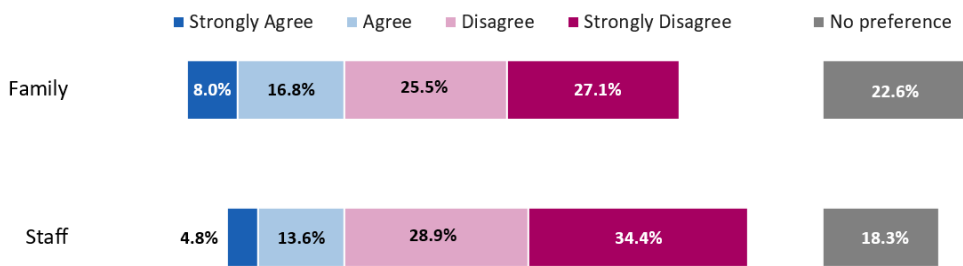
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ No preference



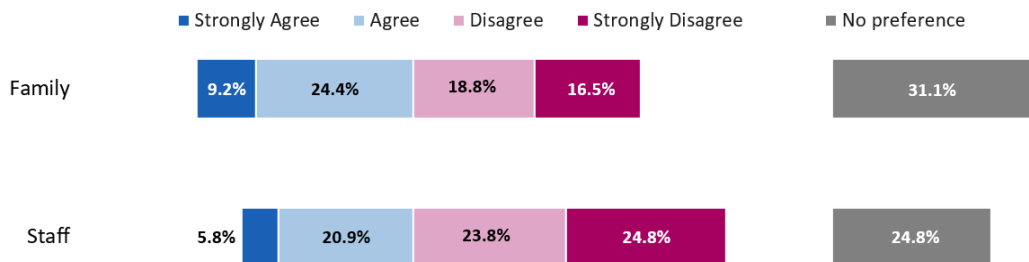
Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing November fall break



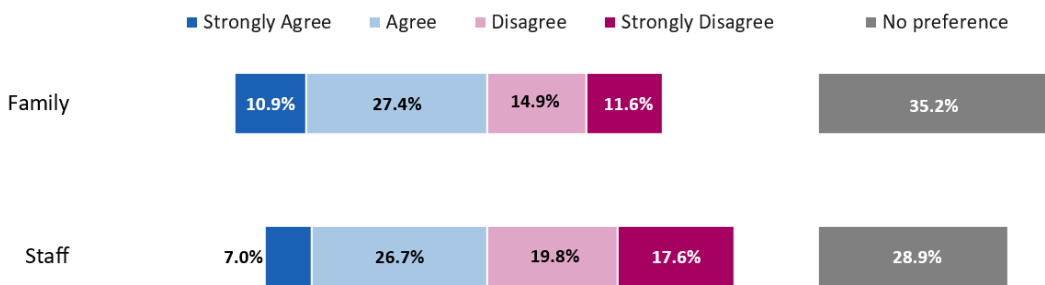
Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing winter break



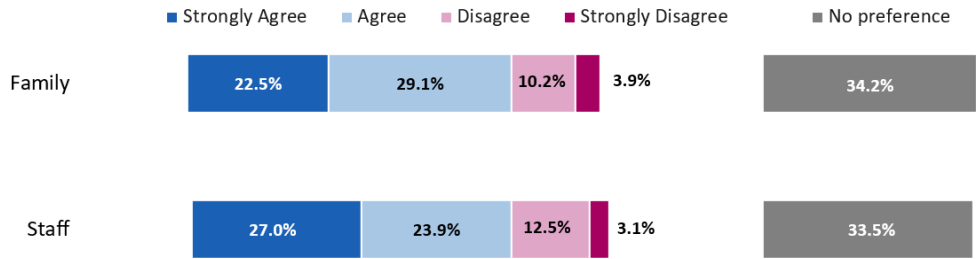
Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing spring break



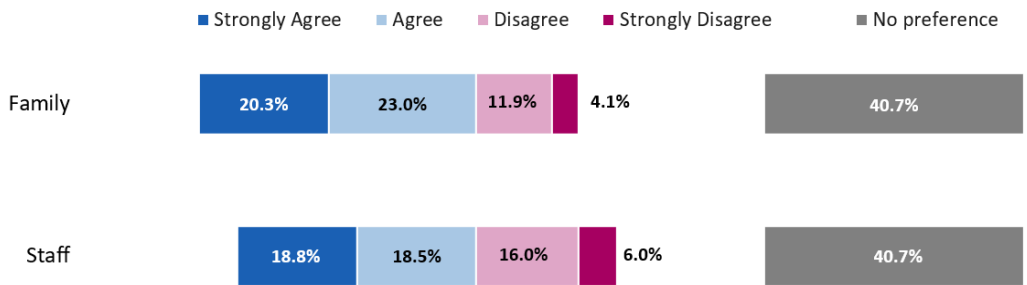
Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing May break



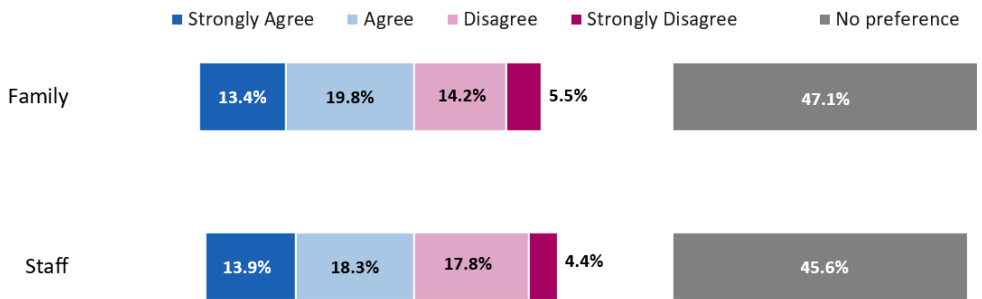
It is important that fall break includes Remembrance Day



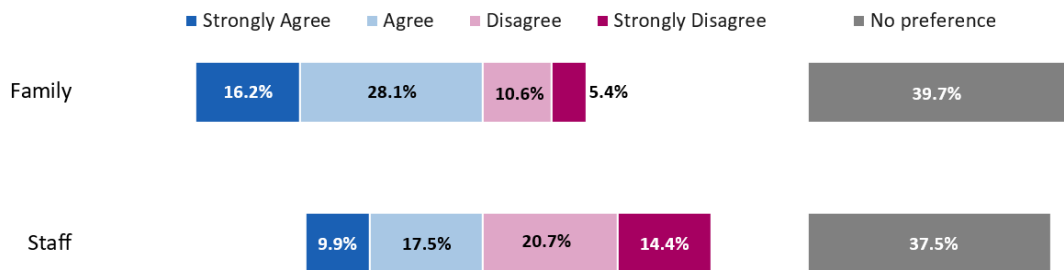
It is important that winter break starts on a Monday



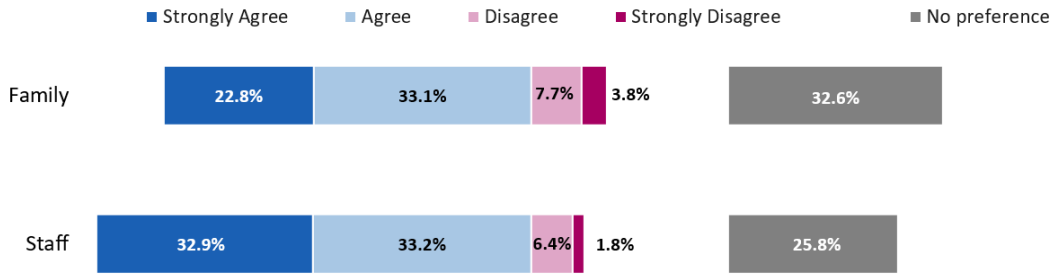
It is important that spring break is always the last week of March



It is important that spring break is set around the spring Monday and Friday holidays

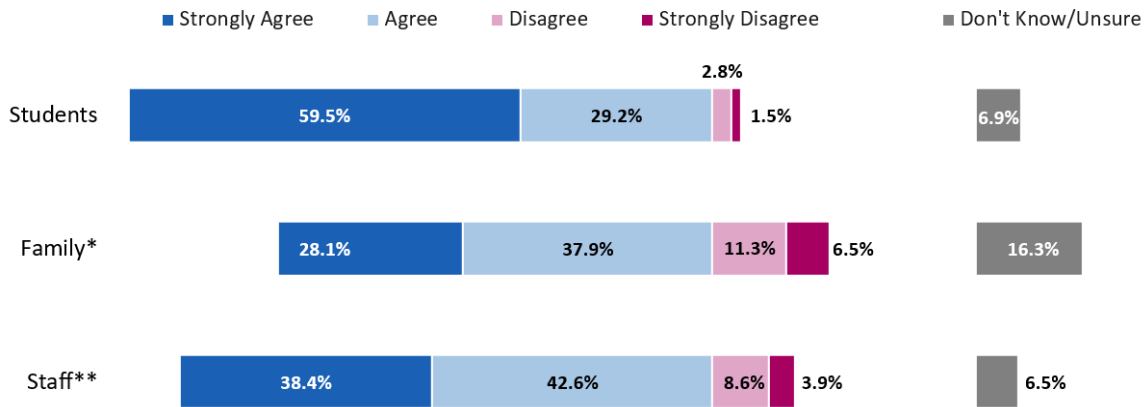


It is important that there is a May break that includes May long weekend



Revised 2020-2021 School Year Calendar

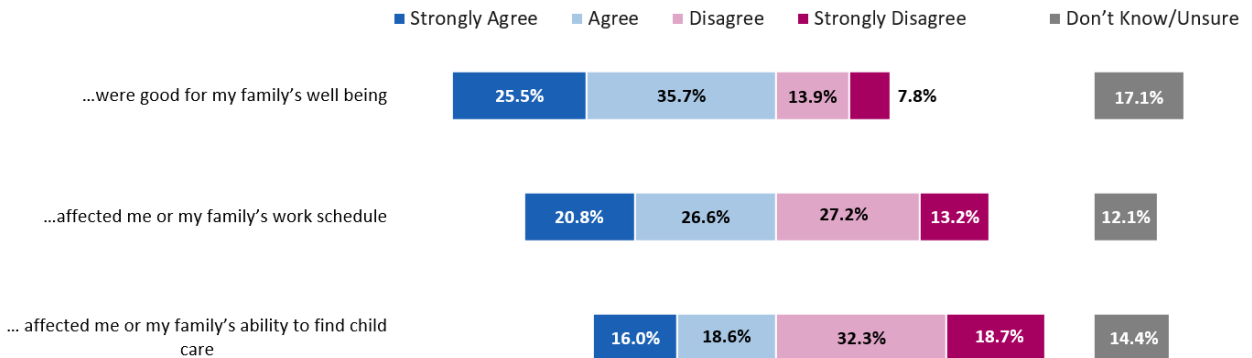
These five extra days off were good for my well being



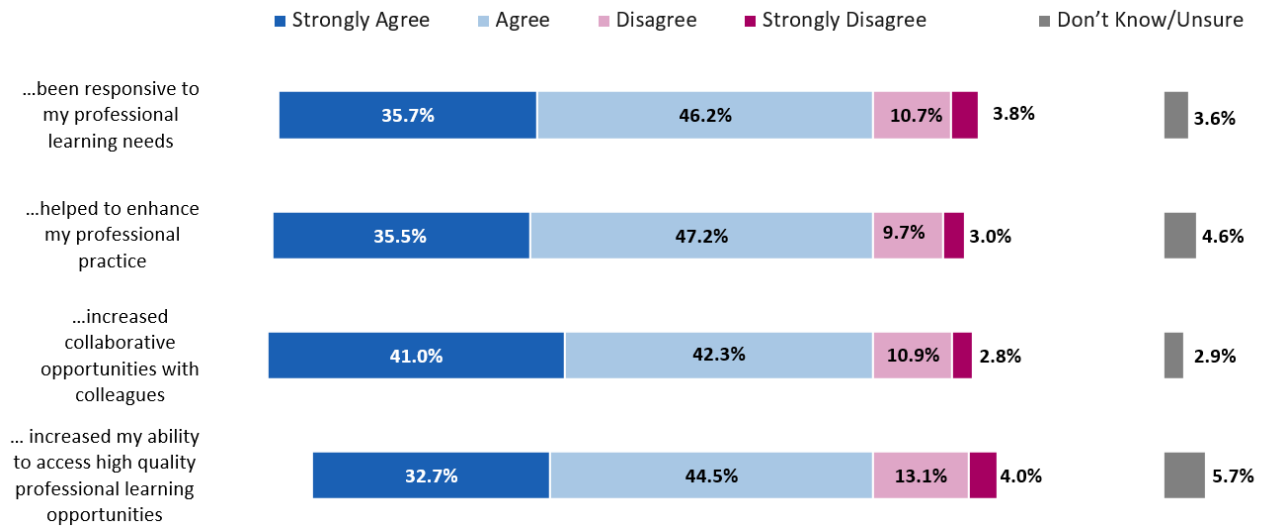
* My child's wellbeing

**The additional PD days have positively impacted my well being.

Family: These five additional days...



Staff: These five additional PD Days...



TABLES

Cultural and Religious Days

Breaks from school are important for my well being

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
Students	27,602	10,283	642	316	1,610	40,453
Family*	1,966	1,458	180	53	67	3,724
Staff	5,214	647	14	11	56	5,942

*...my child's well-being

Breaks from school are important for me and my family to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to us

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
Students*	19,980	10,924	2,866	1,508	5,175	40,453
Family	1,141	1,411	548	330	294	3,724
Staff	2,726	1,932	560	260	464	5,942

*...me to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to us

Breaks from school are important for my classmates to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to them

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
Students	24,289	10,837	896	443	3,988	40,453
Family*	1,380	1,543	281	160	360	3,724
Staff**	3,542	1,806	153	89	352	5,942

* ...people from my school community to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to them

**...people from my school or work community to participate in religious and cultural days that are special to them

To include more cultural and religious holidays, I support school breaks that happen less often but with more days grouped together

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
Students	12,891	11,332	5,459	2,352	7,419	39,453
Family	968	1,158	570	321	707	3,724
Staff	1,875	1,471	831	291	1,259	5,727

To include more cultural and religious holidays, I support school breaks that happen more often but with fewer days grouped together

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
Students	13,507	11,792	4,316	2,141	7,405	39,161
Family	584	910	852	577	801	3,724
Staff	1,210	1,322	1,166	599	1,360	5,657

School Start Date

How supportive would you be if school started the last week of August?

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not Supportive at All	No preference	Total
Family	685	801	1,727	511	3,724
Staff	1,071	1,408	2,632	831	5,942

How supportive would you be if school started the first week of September?

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Not Supportive at All	No preference	Total
Family	2,438	670	128	488	3,724
Staff	3,937	930	134	941	5,942

Potential School Calendar Adjustments

Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of a school calendar with days off in the middle of the week

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	340	681	889	1,208	606	3,724
Staff	453	981	1,616	1,880	1,012	5,942

Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing November fall break

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	412	1,056	548	421	1,287	3,724
Staff	440	1,556	1,205	1,073	1,668	5,942

Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing winter break

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	297	625	951	1,008	843	3,724
Staff	286	807	1,716	2,046	1,087	5,942

Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing spring break

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	342	909	700	613	1,160	3,724
Staff	342	1,241	1,414	1,474	1,471	5,942

Keeping in mind that the total number of days off in the school year will stay the same, I am supportive of changing May break

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	406	1,022	556	431	1,309	3,724
Staff	418	1,584	1,174	1,047	1,719	5,942

It is important that fall break includes Remembrance Day

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	838	1,085	381	146	1,274	3,724
Staff	1,603	1,420	744	184	1,991	5,942

It is important that winter break starts on a Monday

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	757	857	443	152	1,515	3,724
Staff	1,118	1,098	953	355	2,418	5,942

It is important that spring break is always the last week of March

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	498	738	530	203	1,755	3,724
Staff	827	1,087	1,059	260	2,709	5,942

It is important that spring break is set around the spring Monday and Friday holidays

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	604	1,048	393	200	1,479	3,724
Staff	587	1,038	1,230	856	2,231	5,942

It is important that there is a May break that includes May long weekend

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No preference	Total
Family	850	1,231	286	142	1,215	3,724
Staff	1,957	1,972	378	104	1,531	5,942

Revised 2020-2021 School Year Calendar

These five extra days off were good for my well being

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
Students	24,073	11,831	1,142	603	2,804	40,453
Family*	1,045	1,413	419	241	606	3,724
Staff**	1,384	1,534	310	140	233	3,601

* My child's wellbeing

**The additional PD days have positively impacted my well being

Family: These five additional day

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
...were good for my family's well being	948	1,331	516	291	638	3,724
...affected me or my family's work schedule	776	991	1,013	492	452	3,724
... affected me or my family's ability to find child care	597	691	1,202	696	538	3,724

Staff: These five additional PD Days

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure	Total
...been responsive to my professional learning needs	1,286	1,663	386	138	128	3,601
...helped to enhance my professional practice	1,279	1,699	349	108	166	3,601
...increased collaborative opportunities with colleagues	1,478	1,525	392	102	104	3,601
... increased my ability to access high quality professional learning opportunities	1,177	1,601	473	143	207	3,601