



Frequently Asked Questions: School Calendars



When it comes to creating a school calendar, there are a lot of requirements that your school and education body have to take into consideration.

There are laws, policies, and contracts between education bodies and their educators (collective agreements) that lay out how many hours of instruction students in each grade must get, how many hours of professional development educators must get, time and resources for Indigenous languages and cultural programming, etc.

So it can be a bit of a puzzle to make sure all the pieces fall into place and meet all these requirements! Here are some FAQs about school calendars.

I have questions/comments about my school's calendar, who can I contact?

If you have feedback about the calendar, on topics like *early dismissals*, *March break dates* or *professional development days*, contact your **school principal**. If necessary, they can bring your concerns to the education body superintendent or further.

Who creates and approves school calendars?

Northwest Territories (NWT) education bodies are responsible for developing the calendar, which is often done in partnership with the school principal and superintendent. Once they've drafted it, there is a motion for the District Education Authorities (DEA), District Education Councils (DEC), or Commission scolaire francophone Territoires du Nord-Ouest (CSF) to approve the calendar. After that, staff at the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association (NWTTA) review each calendar to make sure they meet all the requirements. Finally, the calendars are submitted to the Minister of ECE.

Once approved, any significant changes to school calendars are made and approved by a DEA/DEC motion. The revised school calendar is submitted to ECE.

What laws, policies and rules do education bodies have to take into account when they're developing the school calendar?

Education bodies must lay out many details in the calendar, including dates for school opening and closing, breaks, statutory holidays, report cards, professional development days for educators, hours of instruction, outside instructional hours (parent/teacher conferences, open houses or cultural events), etc.

Here are some examples of what education bodies must take into consideration for their calendars:

- The [Education Act](#) sets the hours of instruction for students. For example, students in kindergarten must not receive more than 6 hours of instruction a day, Grades 1-6 no more than 5.5 hours/day and Grades 7-12 no more than 5.75 hours/day. Students must receive at least 945 hours of instruction in the school year (or 485 for kindergarten).
- The [Academic Year and School Attendance Regulations](#) lays out in more detail the requirements for the school calendar, the amount of non-instructional time that can be included, and the ability for schools to close for health or safety reasons.
- The [various Collective Agreements](#) establish the number of professional development days that need to be included in the school calendar.
- Through the [Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices \(STIP\) Directive](#), each school year educators have a minimum of 52 hours, max 100 hours of 'non-instructional' time (when they're not teaching students) to be used for student assessment (marking students' work/report cards), and professional planning and learning.
- The NWT [JK-Grade 12 Indigenous Languages and Education Policy](#) directs two days of mandatory cultural training for staff on Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community where they work.

Why do students have so many days off during the school year?

There are different types of non-instructional days in the school calendar, such as statutory holidays, breaks, professional development, STIP time, and administration and in-service days. Non-instructional time is defined in the regulations, directives and policies listed above. The amount of non-instructional time varies between schools and education bodies across the NWT. If you have questions about days off at *your* school, ask your principal for more details.

When are calendars available for the next school year? Can we get them farther in advance?

Calendars for the upcoming school year must be available by **April 1st** of the previous school year (i.e., the 2024-25 school year must be ready by April 1, 2024). You can generally find calendars on the school/education body website, or contact your school principal for a copy.

Do all students attend school for the same number of days/hours across the NWT?

No, depending on your jurisdiction, the number of days within the school year are different. This is, in part, because each school, community, region and collective agreement is unique. For example, your principal may base school opening/closing dates or vacation days on the hunting or harvesting season, or significant cultural days. However, the *Education Act* states that *all* NWT school calendars must include a minimum of 945 instructional hours. It's up to each school to make sure that is met. The number of days teachers must work each year ranges from 192 to 194.

More information

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
www.gov.nt.ca
