



2020-21 Academic Calendar FAQs

Q. What is the requirement by the state for the number of days that students must be in school?

- A. Texas schools are required to provide 75,600 operational minutes minimum per school year. This is a change from the past when there were required numbers of days. Districts also need to plan for bad weather by either adding extra days to their calendars, or by adding to the base number of operational minutes when creating a calendar.

Q. Why can't we start the school year later in August AND end the year before Memorial Day?

- A. As mentioned previously, we must meet 75,600 operational minutes per year to stay in compliance. Unless we drastically cut into holidays and breaks within the school year or significantly lengthen the school day, it is not possible to fit that many operational minutes within that time frame. If we start later, we go later. If we start earlier, we can end earlier.

Q. Why can't we lengthen the school day?

- A. Technically, we can, but the district is not wanting to do that as we already lengthened the school day at all levels by 10 minutes last year. At some point, longer school days do not equate to increased student learning. Teachers also need daily time for preparation, collaboration with other teachers, and to communicate with parents as needed.

Q. Why do we not see Bad Weather Days on the Academic Calendar any longer?

- A. Districts no longer have to meet a number of days requirements for students to be in school, but rather a number of instructional minutes. During a year, a district must either set aside days for two bad weather makeup OR build in enough minutes that would account for two days worth of bad weather days. We chose the second option. Historically, we found that even when days on the calendar were marked as Bad Weather Days, families planned trips and other events on those days and were not happy when the days later had to be used to make up missed school time. In this way, it is already built in. If a third day or more is ever needed in a year, the Texas Education Agency allows for a waiver to excuse those days (actually operational minutes).

Q. Why are teachers coming back so many days before students on the calendars?

- A. Although the requirement has changed for students to operational minutes rather than a mandated number of days, teachers are on a teaching contract which is 187 days in length. Those are required days in service and are comprised of Professional Development Days as well as Teacher Work Days. The common sense thinking is that Professional Development Days at the end of the year have little use as instruction has ended, and teachers are in need of rest. New learning for teachers is better front loaded to fill those other required 18 days so that it can best impact student learning.

Q. Why are there Professional Development Days within the school year?

- A. While new teacher learning and collaborative time is better front loaded than at the end of the year, there are needs for follow-up training, ongoing teacher collaboration, and new student needs (and therefore, training) that needs to be addressed throughout the school year. BISD has a Texas Education Agency Staff Development Waiver where five Professional Development Days on the calendar that fall within the school year (after the first day and before the last day) count for 2,100 operational minutes.

Q. Why does the Calendar Committee seek to end the school year before Memorial Day?

- A. There are two main reasons. First, attendance after Memorial Day becomes problematic. Secondly, many of our students take courses through local colleges in the summer, and traditionally, those summer semesters start directly after Memorial Day. In order to avoid having high school students trying to take high school final exams and trying to navigate a new set of summer semester classes during the same week, ending before Memorial Day becomes ideal.

Q. Does anyone take into consideration my feedback on those calendar surveys?

- A. Yes! While the calendar committee typically recommends the calendar option that shows the greatest amount of support on the survey, other comments and feedback are taken into consideration.