

Why are we Afraid of Year-Round Schooling?

Students cherish the long summer vacation. After all, it is a ten week break from the stress that school brings into the lives of many.

However, researchers have long proven (dating back to William F. White's [1906](#) study) that the current school calendar can impede learning if students do not keep up their academic skills throughout the summer.

In the education community, it's known as the "Summer Slide," and it's a season of students losing abilities that they worked hard to master during the school year.

According to the [National Summer Learning Association](#), a non-profit organization whose goal is to close the achievement gap, grade-school students [fail to retain](#) two months of math knowledge during the summer break. They can also lose up to three months of reading comprehension skills.

If so much knowledge is lost, why was this system created in the first place?

Many attribute the current schedule to farming needs in the 1800s, when in fact it was simply due to the sheer heat of urban schools in the summer months, which, without air conditioning, were especially unpleasant.

Today, and for the last half-century, the United States and its schools have largely used air conditioning. Yet our country still uses this extremely counterproductive and outdated system which, while it may be slightly cheaper than the alternative, does nothing but decrease retention of the academic curriculum.

The American education system has long lagged behind, and even though efforts are being made to improve our standing, they aren't anything close to sufficient. In last year's Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [report](#), the United States had the 28th best test scores out of the 76 countries included in the report.

Many top countries have a vastly different education system than that of the United States. But Australia, whose government spends about the same per student as the United States, placed 14th in the same OECD report. They utilize a more year-round school calendar. The Australian school year consists of four government-mandated ten-week terms, with breaks of an average length of about 4 weeks in between. If the United States were to adopt a similar system, students would have fewer opportunities to lose knowledge.

[Abbott Middle School](#) in San Mateo has had year-round schooling since 2007, and in each of the first five years, test scores increased. But the Bay Area has not taken to this idea, even with the [success](#) of Piedmont Elementary School in West Virginia, which has been operating on a year-round calendar for two decades. Steve Knighton, the school's principal, has reported improved attendance and fewer behavioral problems during that time period.

The vast majority of American legislators and school districts have refused to embrace a system that would improve the educational standing of America in the world. And until year-round schooling is adopted, American students will continue to be held back.