

Christian Academy School Calendar Development

Frequently Asked Questions: Part 1

How is the first day of school determined?

The August start date is determined primarily by the way the days fall on the calendar for the year. To see this, look at the way Christmas falls on the calendar, consider the usual Christmas break, then move backwards in the calendar about 90 days excluding holidays. That is when school will start. Generally, the more instructional days that can be scheduled in December, the later school can start in August.

The 2017-18 school year represents the tightest of calendars, so school started on August 9. The start of school in 2018-19 is likely to be August 15.

One other factor impacting the first day of school is the desire for the first week of school to be 2-3 days long. Starting school with a full week of classes is especially difficult for young students. Planning a short week gives a reasonable transition period for students and teachers followed by a most welcome weekend. We try to schedule this short week, but sometimes it simply won't fit.

What is the purpose of the days schools are closed in the fall?

In addition to scheduling student days, teachers are scheduled for an additional 10 days for preparation for school to start and close, on-going training, and special projects. The most effective time to train teachers is in the fall. Our fall schedule for the past several years has focused on the continuing training and preparation of teachers and special teacher projects. The breaks in the school calendar during the fall months (usually 2 weekdays) have been designed around the specific programs of professional development and work projects (curriculum development, for example) for teachers for the year.

Some of the professional development projects are best presented in blocks of time—perhaps 2 days back-to-back. Others are best scheduled with a day of training followed by weeks in the classroom followed by an additional day of follow-up training.

When scheduling in-service days in the fall, we try to arrange them around weekends so families can have extended time together. However, the purpose and focus of scheduling those days is teacher training.

Why does Christian Academy attempt to schedule 180 days for students in Kentucky?

The Christian Academy calendar is designed around best practices in education. Several years ago we researched school calendar designs for states with high performing schools and high performing private schools. We determined that 180 instructional days was the benchmark for an effective school year.

Based on this information, it has been our goal to schedule 180 instructional days for at least the last 20 years. We adjust a day or two when the calendar is tight reducing scheduled days to 178 or even 177. However, we will return to 180 instructional days when we can make it fit reasonably into the calendar.

Generally, states set their requirements for school calendars based on funding proposals, not best practices. Kentucky's current standard, which is 1,062 hours of instruction delivered on no fewer than 170 days, defines the *minimum* schools must do to receive funding. It is not a reflection of a best practice in education. Therefore, changes in the Kentucky minimum requirement are unlikely to impact the Christian Academy Kentucky calendar. (Indiana requires 180 instructional days.)

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Why did Christian Academy extend the length of the school day in Kentucky?

A few years ago, Christian Academy extended the school day to make up required instructional time missed due to snow days. In preparing to make that change, we researched the length of the school day for high performing private and public schools across the country. We found that targeted private schools and more than 30 states exceed the Kentucky minimum for 6 hours of instruction daily.

With this in mind and also considering the difficulty for families and staff when it is necessary to schedule make-up days, we extended the length of the school day by adding 12-15 minutes of instruction daily. This extension impacted only two campuses, since the others already met or exceeded the new minimum.

Why does school start in July at Christian Academy of Indiana?

A couple of years ago, the large public school systems in southern Indiana adopted a balanced calendar format. The concept is this: Instructional time and breaks from school are scheduled more evenly around an annual calendar. There are 2-week breaks in October, at Christmas and spring break. To schedule the 180 state required instructional days, school must start in late July.

Christian Academy of Indiana families were surveyed in fall 2016 about this calendar format. More than 80% of the responses were favorable.

What is a recess day?

A recess day is simply a day off if we don't need it as a make-up day. (Usually in May)

How are Christmas and Spring Breaks scheduled?

We schedule the Christmas and spring breaks around the local public school system calendars so families and students can take advantage of the programs offered by their churches and the community. In Kentucky we schedule with Jefferson County Public Schools and in Indiana we schedule with New Albany/Floyd County and Greater Clark County Public Schools.

What factors impact the end of the school year?

The end of the school year is kept close to that of the local school systems since our students are active in organizations that plan around the public school calendar. It is our intention to schedule the end of the school year in May, if possible. Local church summer programs for students begin the first of June. Also, college summer programs for students and teachers begin then as well.

If you have additional questions, please send them to jwells@caschools.us.

Calendars/Schedules/2017-18<9/26/2017>jmw