

## YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL

By Joe Venuti

Presently, in most states, there are approximately 180 days scheduled as school days. Out of these, usually 5 or more are wasted with things like “teacher’s conferences” or “half-days”. No teaching is done on any of these days. From the net, “The minimum *number of school days per year in Japan* is prescribed as 240”. This includes some Saturdays. That’s an average of 20 school days per month for 12 months. Does anyone wonder why Japan’s students are so far advanced over ours?

I would propose a system that would be called a “year-round” system for the US. It would consist of four 13-week quarters. Each quarter would require 55 school days; no scheduled “teacher’s conferences” or “half days”. Fifty-five days of actual schooling!

The teaching day would consist of six hours of teaching academic subjects. Class scheduling shall be designed to maximize time learning subject matter, and reducing “free time” and study halls as much as possible. The hours after the six academic teaching hours would be used for extra-curricular activities, including art, music, and sports, and all participated in on an elective basis. The other 10 “weekdays” during each quarter would be for vacations, scheduled around, and to include, the traditional holidays.

As an example, let’s suppose that one of the quarters starts on December 1, and runs for 13 weeks. The scheduled days off would be eight weekdays to include Christmas through New Year’s Day, one day for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and one day for Presidents Day. All the rest of the weekdays in those 13 weeks would be scheduled school days.

Interscholastic sports would be scheduled during the first 11 weeks of the quarter. The first 2 weeks for practice, and the next 9 weeks for game schedule. These first 11 weeks may contain some scheduled days of vacation or holidays. Then, the last two weeks of each quarter will be used for state tournaments. Again, these two weeks may or may not contain scheduled school days, vacation days or holidays. One big advantage of this schedule is that each quarter shall contain at least one major sport. Football and girls’ soccer in the quarter most resembling the Fall; basketball and volleyball in the “Winter”, cross country and boys’ soccer in the Spring; and baseball and track in the Summer. This will allow some athletes to participate in 4 sports throughout the year.

Another issue is teachers’ salaries. For as long as I can remember, teachers’ primary complaint is that they do not make as much money as other college graduates make in the private sector. Of course, they do not complain about their working only 180 days a year, or that they are guaranteed annual pay raises, or that they have to virtually commit a major felony in order to be fired, or that knowing less about their subject than their students do does not affect their job security. They like having their summers off, but a great percentage of them take on summer jobs (at lower hourly pay) to supplement their school salary.

The year-round system would cause an immediate increase in teachers’ salaries. We all know that teachers gripe about their salaries, no matter what level it is. This system will allow them to get the salaries which they now get for each of nine or ten months, to be paid them over 12 months. They will still get 40 days off (combined holidays and vacation days), which is still more than most people

get in jobs in private industry. Once we clean out the deadwood from the teaching ranks, this higher pay would attract many bright and capable people into the teaching field. It's a win-win situation for both teachers and students.

Now consider the efficiency (greening) of every school system in the country actually using all of these multi-million-dollar buildings for 12 months of the year. No corporation would ever build a factory building that they planned to use for only nine months of the year. Why should taxpayers pay for expensive school buildings, and only use them for nine months? In our present system, during the summer months when school is not in session, all school systems still have to maintain these buildings, consume utilities for them, and pay the administrators to sit in these big empty buildings. It makes no sense to not use them for their intended purposes of teaching our youth.

Administrators and their staffs have always been paid a year-round salary. This system will now give them something to do for the extra couple of months that school is in session. This will not increase the cost of administration; just increase the productivity of those in administration.

Teachers' pensions: While most teachers cry over their inferior salaries, none ever complains over their very superior retirement pay and benefits. These costs are borne by the taxpayers. I knew a couple here in Florida who both retired from the NYC school system at age 65. Their max pay when they retired was approximately \$40,000 per year. In their late eighties, they had a combined retirement income of \$140,000, and had been on fully paid health care plans since their retirement. There is no justification for anyone to retire with a higher annual income than they ever made during any of their working years.

This year-round system will cost the taxpayers more money, but it will be more wisely spent than just throwing more money at the present system. That tactic has been going on for decades without improving the academic results.

In addition to higher teacher salaries, bus drivers will have pay increases, but busses will be used the entire year increasing the efficiency of that investment. Also, the cost of operating the school buildings will increase, but that will also be much more efficient. Leaving multi-million dollar buildings empty for months is a waste of resources and inefficient.