



Illinois State Board of Education

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Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William E. Brady, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President
The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor

FROM: Dr. Carmen I. Ayala 
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: December 26, 2019

SUBJECT: School Start Date Study

The School Start Date Study report is being submitted to comply with House Resolution 244 (Murphy), which urges the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to study the impact of the beginning a school term during various points throughout August.

This report is transmitted on behalf of the State Superintendent of Education. For additional copies of this report or for more specific information, please contact Amanda Elliott, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs at (217) 782-6510 or aelliott@isbe.net.

cc: Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Senate
John W. Hollman, Clerk of the House
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center



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School Start Date Study

This report is being submitted to comply with House Resolution 244 (Murphy), which urges the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to study the impact of the beginning a school term during various points throughout August.

The study was produced by ISBE's Research and Evaluation Office:

Dr. Brenda M. Dixon, Research and Evaluation Officer
Dr. Shuwan Chiu, Principal Analyst
Nolan Fine
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Howard Hammel
Teresa Moy

Background

HR 244 (Murphy) was adopted by the Illinois House of Representatives on May 30, 2019. The resolution urges ISBE to study the impact of beginning a school term during various points throughout August as compared to after Labor Day.

The resolution requires ISBE to submit a report to the General Assembly by December 31, 2019, that includes the following information:

- 1) A summary of current school term start dates in school districts throughout Illinois, and
- 2) Laws in other states that govern when a school term may commence.

Research Questions

ISBE developed the following research questions to comply with the resolution:

- 1) What is the first student day of school for each of our 852 districts in Illinois? How many districts start before Labor Day and how many districts start after Labor Day?
- 2) What policy or legislation do the other 49 states have regarding the first day of school? How many states start before Labor Day and how many states start after Labor Day?

Research Question 1: What is the first student day of school for each of our 852 districts in Illinois? How many districts start before Labor Day and how many districts start after Labor Day?

Per Section 10-19 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/10-19], each local school board creates its own annual school calendar. These calendars must specify school opening and closing dates that accommodate a minimum term of at least 185 days to ensure 176 days of actual pupil attendance. Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) are assigned primary approval of all district calendars in their jurisdiction, including any changes. ISBE approves ROE alternative school program calendars as well as certain types of student and teacher attendance days in district calendars.

ISBE utilizes the Student Information System and the School Calendar data systems to collect first day of school date data. Six Local Education Agencies (LEAs) out of 852 school districts in Illinois (1 percent) start school after Labor Day (Figure 1), which represents 18 percent of statewide student enrollment (Figure 2).

Figure 1

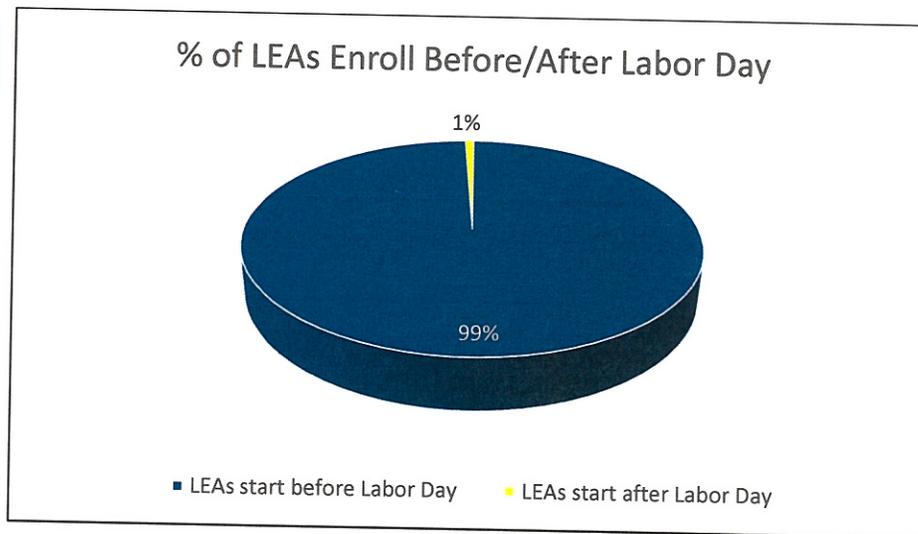
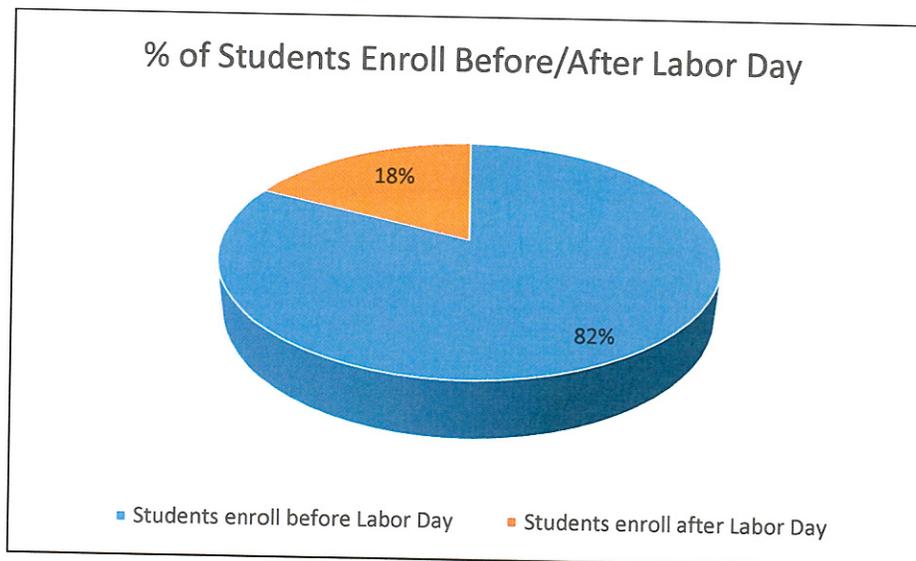


Figure 2



Research Question 2: What policy or legislation do the other 49 states have regarding the first day of school? How many states start before Labor Day and how many states start after Labor Day?

A uniform school calendar is an ongoing topic of discussion in states across our country. The first day of school impacts state testing windows, data collection scheduling, and a myriad of other school and community initiatives. Accordingly, a variety of strategies have been implemented or considered across the United States.

Nationally, Hawaii is the only state that has a statewide school calendar; notably, Hawaii has only one school district. The University of Vermont conducted a study and found that some states require a uniform start date.

The Office of Legislative Research in Connecticut researched legislation in 2018 regarding school start dates in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia. Only New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia regulated the first day of school. Eighteen of the 50 states have laws regulating the first day of school. Three of those states (Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) prohibit starting school prior to Labor Day.

Appendix

State	Statutorily Mandated	Related Law or Regulation
Alabama	No	Most schools begin in early August.
Alaska	No	
Arizona	No	
Arkansas	Yes	Schools may not begin (i) on or after the Monday of the week in which August 19 falls; (ii) not earlier than August 14, and the third Monday of each August; (iii) no later than August 26.
California	No	
Colorado	No	
Connecticut	No	
Delaware	No	
Florida	Yes	Schools may not begin until August 10.
Georgia	No	
Hawaii	Yes	All schools begin August 5.
Idaho	No	
Illinois	No	
Indiana	Yes	Public schools and accredited nonpublic schools may not begin before the last Monday in August.
Iowa	Yes	Schools may not begin before August 23.
Kansas	No	
Kentucky	Yes	A local board may adopt a variable instructional school year calendar, with the first school day begin no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26.
Louisiana	No	
Maine	No	
Maryland	No	
Massachusetts	No	
Michigan	Yes	Schools must begin after Labor Day.
Minnesota	Yes	Schools must begin after Labor Day.
Mississippi	Yes	Schools may begin on or after the third Monday in August.
Missouri	Yes	Schools may begin no sooner than 10 days before the first Monday in September. A law takes effect for the 2020-21 school year that would prohibit schools from starting more than 14 calendar days before Labor Day.
Montana	No	
Nebraska	No	
Nevada	No	
New Hampshire	No	
New Jersey	No	
New Mexico	No	
New York	Yes	Schools must begin in September.

North Carolina	Yes	Schools may not begin before the Monday closest to August 26.
North Dakota	No	
Ohio	No	
Oklahoma	No	
Oregon	No	
Pennsylvania	No	
Rhode Island	Yes	Schools may not begin later than the first Thursday following the first Monday of September.
South Carolina	Yes	Schools may not begin before the third Monday in August.
South Dakota	No	
Tennessee	Yes	Schools may not begin before August 1 unless approved by the local school board.
Texas	Yes	Schools may not begin before the fourth Monday in August.
Utah	No	
Vermont	No	
Virginia	Yes	Schools may begin no earlier than 14 days before Labor Day.
Washington	No	
West Virginia	No	
Wisconsin	Yes	Schools may not begin prior to September 1.
Wyoming	No	

References

- Alabama: <https://legiscan.com/AL/research/HB396/2019>
- Arkansas: <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2019/2019R/Pages/BillInformation.aspx?measureno=HB1390>
- Connecticut: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/rpt/pdf/2018-R-0299.pdf>
- Florida: http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=1000-1099/1001/Sections/1001.42.html
- Hawaii: <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/Pages/Calendar.aspx>
- Indiana: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2017/bills/senate/88>
- Iowa: <https://educateiowa.gov/resources/legal-resources/legal-lessons/school-start-date-co-curricular-vs-extra-curricular>
- Kentucky: <https://education.ky.gov/districts/enrol/Pages/School-Calendar.aspx>
- Michigan: [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(jka5d1ggcgvyuatdoxqrfjbp\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=mcl-380-1284b](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(jka5d1ggcgvyuatdoxqrfjbp))/mileg.aspx?page=GetObject&objectname=mcl-380-1284b)
- Minnesota: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/120A.40>
- Mississippi: <https://trackbill.com/bill/mississippi-house-bill-456-school-start-date-act-repeal-in-order-to-allow-local-school-boards-to-determine-the-start-of-a-new-academic-year/654424/>
- Missouri: <https://legiscan.com/MO/bill/HB161/2019>
- New York: https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?default_fld=&bn=A03600&term=2015&Summary=Y&Actions=Y&Votes=Y&Memo=Y&Text=Y
- North Carolina: <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/fbs/accounting/calendar/>
- Rhode Island: <https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Board-of-Education/Regulations/School-Calendar-School-Day.pdf>
- South Carolina: <https://legiscan.com/SC/bill/H3095/2019>
- Texas: <https://texas.public.law/statutes/tex. educ. code section 25.0811>
- Virginia: <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?191+sum+HB1652>
- Wisconsin: https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/pi/27