

EPS Academic Calendar Development

The goal of this document is to overview considerations that come into play in the construction of our school calendar.

Calendar Revision Schedule

The Elkhorn Public Schools (EPS) academic calendars are developed and recommended by the EPS Administration and approved by the EPS Board of Education. Calendars must be finalized no later than the second Monday of May in the preceding year (EPS Board Policy 602.01). District practice has been to approve calendars 3 years in advance; however, calendars may be modified to accommodate emerging issues.

General Guiding Principles

1. Student Learning is our top priority – Elkhorn is one the highest achieving districts in Nebraska and it is a goal to keep student learning as our primary focus.
2. EPS is not a “minimum” district – In order to maintain Elkhorn’s high levels of achievement, the district has committed to exceed the annual minimum instructional hours required by the Nebraska Department of Education.
3. Final exams before winter break – Parents, students, and staff have indicated strong support for completing first semester and high school finals prior to winter break, allowing for a true academic break.
4. Year-end prior to Memorial Day – It is a historical community preference that the school year ends prior to Memorial Day each year. This also avoids graduation ceremonies during the Memorial Day weekend.
5. Avoid one or two-day school weeks (except at the beginning of a semester) – This helps minimize attendance concerns associated with shortened weeks.
6. Balanced semesters – Semesters need to include a similar number of days in order to assure comparable instructional time for semester courses, targeting no more than a 7-day variance.

Additional Considerations

(Note that these considerations may come into conflict with each other, and it is not always possible to accommodate all preferences)

- Inclement weather – Allowances must be made to accommodate days when weather makes attendance unsafe for students and/or staff.
- Calendar variability - The day of the week for Christmas and New Year’s Day, and the date for Memorial Day have significant impact on the calendar. Specifically, the calendar is most impacted when Memorial Day is earlier in May and when the winter-break holidays fall mid-week.
- Preference for shorter breaks – From an educational perspective, it is preferable to have multiple shorter breaks spaced through the year.

- **Avoid holiday graduation ceremonies** - The district has avoided holding graduation ceremonies on Mother's Day or Memorial Day in order to minimize family schedule conflicts.
- **Required number of days** – The calendar must include the number of student and staff days that have been negotiated locally, as well as the number of instructional hours required by the Nebraska Department of Education.
- **Avoid late starts or early outs** - Many districts use partial days in order to conduct professional development. Elkhorn families have indicated that child-care is more difficult for partial days, and that full days are preferable.
- **Assure adequate professional development time** - Elkhorn is a rapidly growing district with high expectations for its new teachers, and spaced time is needed for training and collaboration in order to assure high quality instruction and equity across buildings.
- **Avoid long breaks in April** – This is due to the need to schedule Nebraska's state tests across multiple buildings and grade levels.
- **Avoid starting the school year on a Monday** - A Monday start to the year can be very difficult for primary age students.
- **Winter Break** – Efforts are made to avoid starting winter break after Dec. 22nd and/or ending before Jan. 3rd.
- **Spring Break** – A full week of break is scheduled following 3rd quarter in order to allow for family travel and to minimize absence rates.
- **Martin Luther King Day as a student vacation day** – This is scheduled to allow families to participate in area activities and community service.
- **Time for grading and reporting** – In-service days are spaced in order to assure that a half-day of time is included for teacher grading and reporting at the end of each quarter.
- **Sports and Activities** – It is inevitable that practices, activities, and competitions will be scheduled during breaks throughout the year. While the district encourages full participation in sports and activities during the fall, winter, and spring seasons, the scheduling of sporting events and activities is generally not a consideration for purposes of developing the school calendar.

Definitions

Instructional day – Days that students receive teacher-led instruction (Elkhorn currently requires 177 instructional days each year)

In-service day – Days when teachers report for professional development, cross-building collaboration, grading time, and/or curriculum planning

Contract day – Days that staff members are required to report for instruction or in-service under the current negotiated agreement (Elkhorn currently requires 190 contract days each year)