

Summary of D34 PTA Council School Calendar Survey Final Survey Results – November 12, 2008

This anonymous survey collected online responses through a PTA Council distribution list beginning on October 15, 2008 and was sent out to all available District parent emails on October 17 through the District email newsletter. The survey link was also distributed through PTA emails, websites and newsletters. Paper versions were made available at each school location and also in Spanish the week of October 24th. The eleven paper surveys returned were entered manually. The survey was closed November 12, 2008. A total of 545 surveys were started, with a 92.3% completion rate (503 complete). With the assumption that one survey was completed per family, this represents approximately a 19% response rate across all district families.

Executive Summary

While the majority of parents are open to, or feel strongly, about changes to the school calendar (over 70%), there are mixed views on what those changes ought to be. (Q2/Q17)

Questions 12 and 16 provided some indication of overall parent priorities. When parents were asked to select the **most important** guideline for the calendar, **the highest response (43%) was to start as close to Labor Day as possible, followed by (24%) match district 225's calendar**, while an early June school year end date received only 16%. (Q12) We also asked parents to select statements that reflect their feelings about the school calendar. The highest ranking statement (48%) indicated that **the end of August was an important time for family to spend together**, this was followed by: (35%) summer vacation should be longer, (31%) concerns with loss of knowledge over the summer, (31%) concerns with need for more student-teacher time, (27%) more time in school is better, and (8%) kids are in school too much time.

When looking at preferred non-attendance school days during the school year, parents favored, by a slight margin, to maintain the current calendar schedule. This includes a majority in favor of Labor Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, and Memorial Day continuing to be non-attendance days. (Q4) Parents with an opinion were nearly split equally as to whether religious holidays should remain as non-attendance days (41% attendance vs. 42% non-attendance). (Q5) Election days were preferred by 54% to continue as non-attendance days (Q6). 47% of parents were in favor of continuing to start the school year on a Wednesday or Thursday, while 28% felt it should start earlier on Monday or Tuesday (Q9)

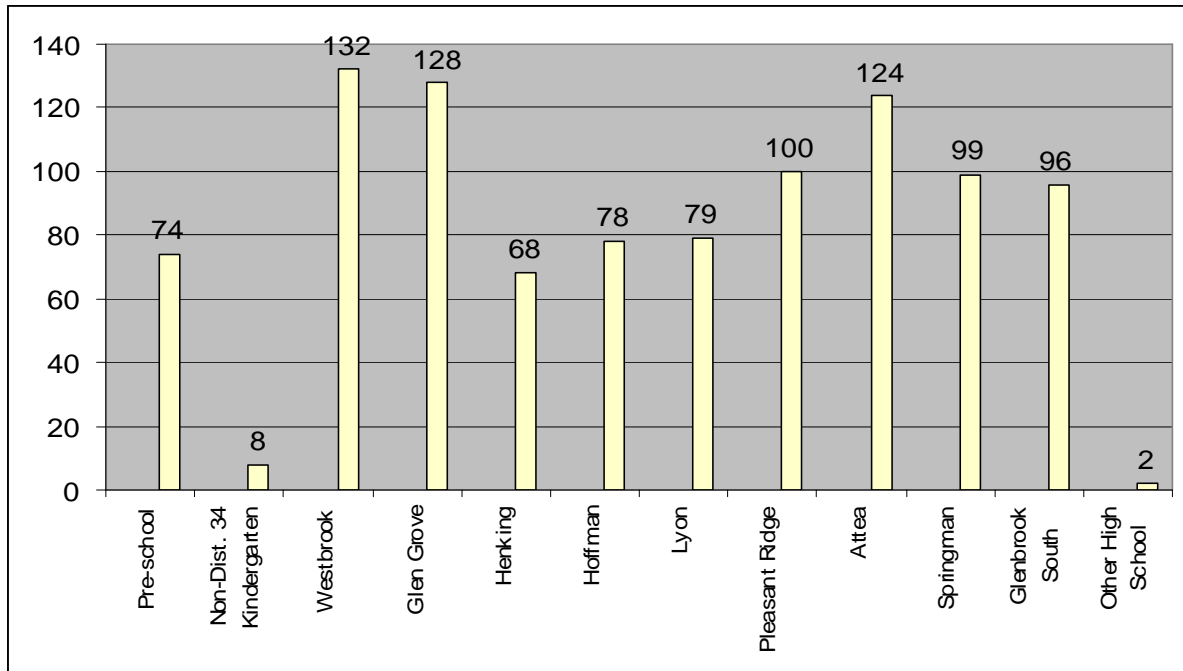
When asked about which school breaks are most important to match GBS High School District 225, parents cited spring break as most important (29%), winter break as second most important (26%), followed by Thanksgiving (16%), first day of school (15%), and last day of school (13%).

Parents had a clear desire for administration to look at moving one or more teacher institute days before start of school (80%) (Q8). Other new ideas that were presented had mixed parent views on whether they should be considered. A slight majority of parents requested that the District look at making the school day longer by 5-10 minutes, with approximately one third of parents against it (Q11/Q15) Close to half of parents were in favor of pursuing an option of up to 4 shortened school days, with approximately 40% of parents against. (Q10/Q15)

When parents were asked about the overall number of school attendance days, 48% felt that the students should attend the current 180 days, 19% felt days should be increased, 19% felt it should be reduced, with 14% of parents having no opinion.

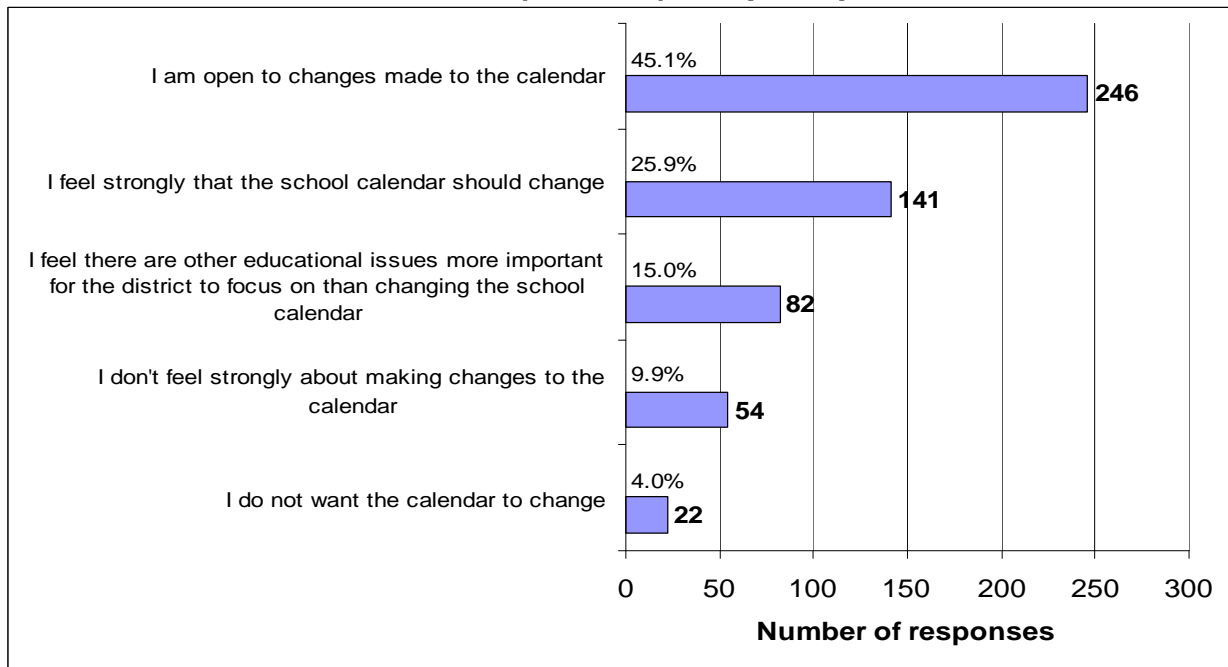
Results summary by survey question:

Question 1: Which school(s) do you currently have students in attendance? Check all that apply. (n=545)

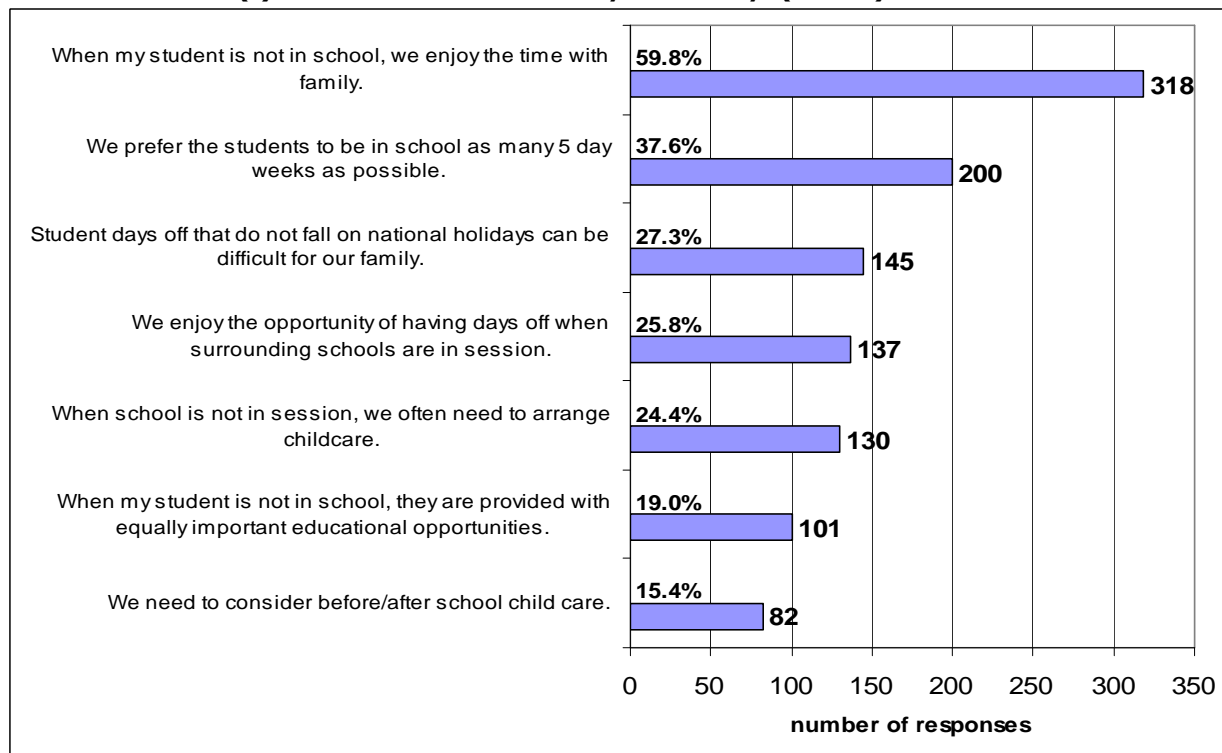


Assuming just one student per family, per building, **888 (20%)** of district students were represented in the responses above.

Question 2: When thinking of the District 34 student calendar, please check the statement below that best describes your viewpoint. (n=545)



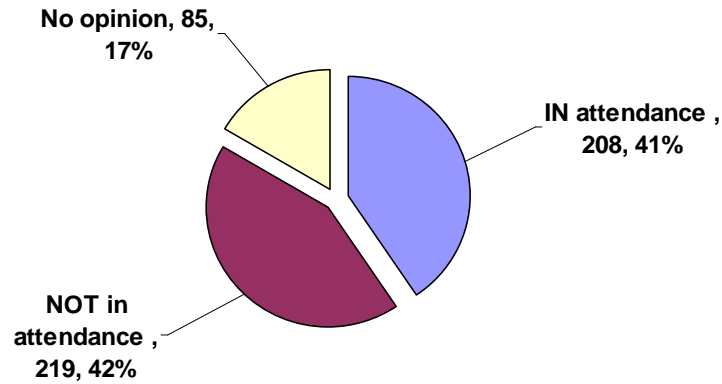
Question 3: When thinking about your students and the school calendar, please check all the statement(s) below that best match your family. (n=532)



Question 4: The Illinois State Board of Education mandates legal student non-attendance holidays. School districts have the ability to apply to the state for a waiver, and if approved, will allow for student attendance on that holiday. Listed below are all mandated holidays as well as our district's current attendance status. Please indicate your opinion as to whether you feel that students should be in attendance or not. (n=510)

Answer Options	Prefer students IN school	Prefer students NOT IN school	No opinion
Labor Day (September, currently non-attendance day)	7	492	9
Columbus Day (October, currently students IN school)	281	106	120
Veteran's Day (November, currently students IN school)	325	71	107
Martin Luther King Day (January, currently non-attendance day)	182	225	100
President's Day (February, currently non-attendance day)	135	274	96
Lincoln's Birthday (February, currently students IN school)	366	33	101
Casmir Pulaski Day (March, currently students IN school)	408	20	76
Memorial Day (May, currently non-attendance day)	9	489	7

Question 5: District 34 currently observes the following religious holidays - Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday. Please indicate if you prefer students in attendance on these holidays. (n=512)

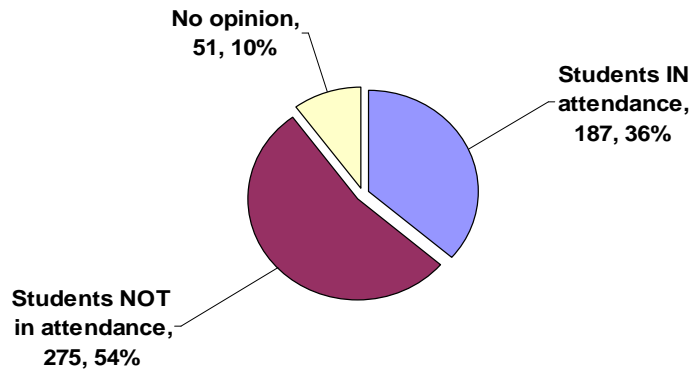


Respondents were also asked to list any other days that their children do not attend school. Of the 45 comments written in, 15 comments were general in nature, are categorized below with the full comments in the Appendix, 15 comments listed the holidays above or Christmas, and 1 comment was "none." Below are the additional holidays that were noted.

Holiday	Number of Responses
Orthodox Good Friday	6
Passover	3
Holy Thursday	1
Easter Monday	1
Orthodox Easter Monday	1
Orthodox Holy Thursday	1
Eid (Muslim Holiday Celebrated twice each year)	1
Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12)	1
Ramadan	1
Shavuot	1

Type of Comment	Quantity of Comments
Religious holidays should be attendance days	6
Religious holidays should be non-attendance days	3
Ok with either attendance or not on religious holidays	2
Consider when holidays are scheduled	1
Support for half days on religious holidays	1
Idea about scheduling religious holidays	1
misc. comment	1
	15 total

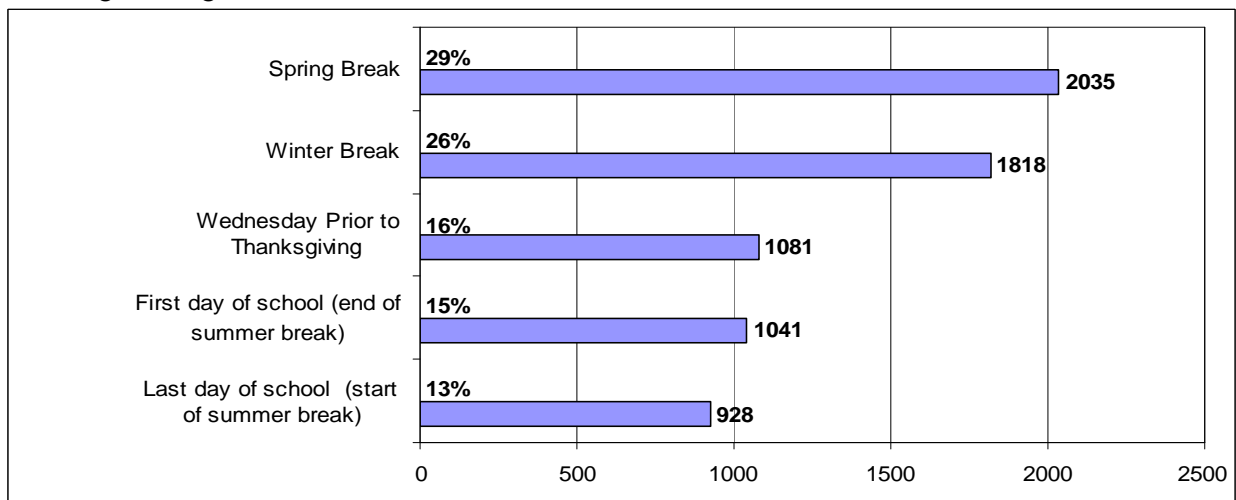
Question 6: On major election dates (like Presidential elections) the District currently does not have students in attendance due to the fact that most of our schools are utilized as polling places. The rationale for non-attendance on these dates has been that the building is open to the general public. Please state your preference below. (n=513)



Question 7: District 34 and District 225 (which includes Glenbrook South) are different districts. It is not possible to match all of the key vacation dates noted below. Parents with students in both districts have asked the District to match the two calendars as closely as possible. Please rank the following in order of importance. (n=486)

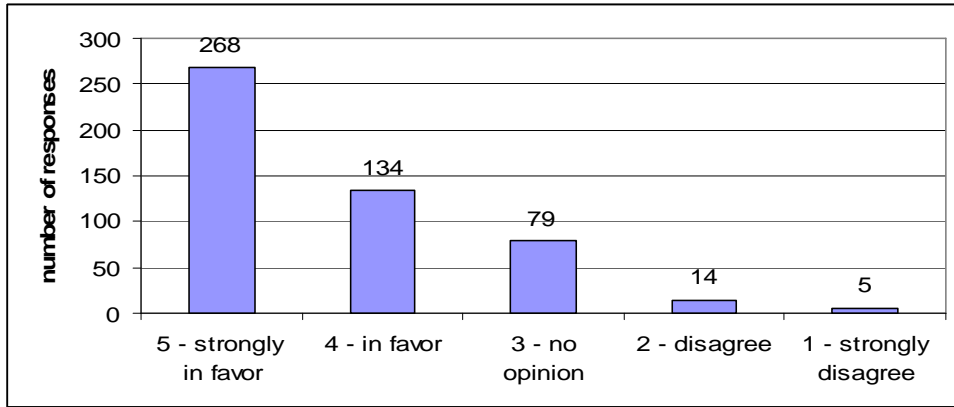
Answer Options	Highest 5	4	3	2	Lowest 1
Spring Break	275	126	36	19	10
Winter Break	127	232	57	37	10
First day of school (end of summer break)	46	37	110	169	105
Wednesday Prior to Thanksgiving	18	36	196	46	167
Last day of school (start of summer break)	11	36	62	187	169

When responses are weighted by multiplying the number of responses by the rating, the following ranking is created.

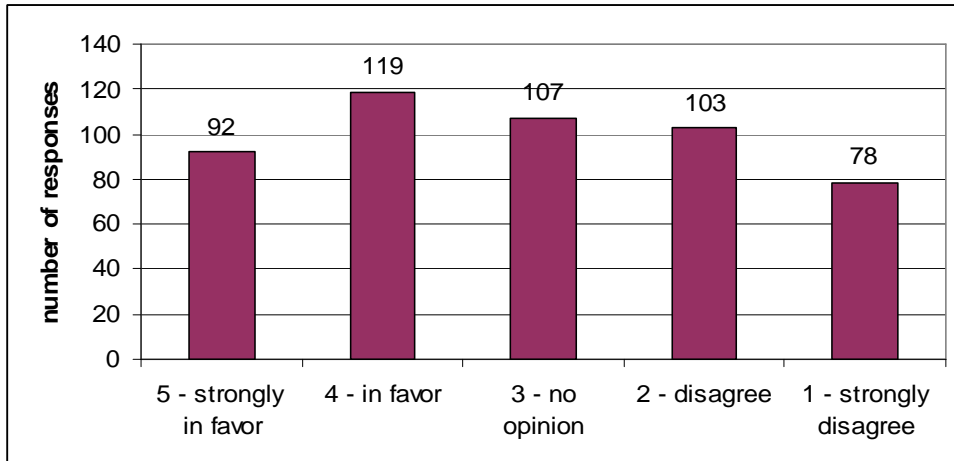


Question 8. Please rank the following statements below based upon how strongly you feel the district should consider them in future school calendars.

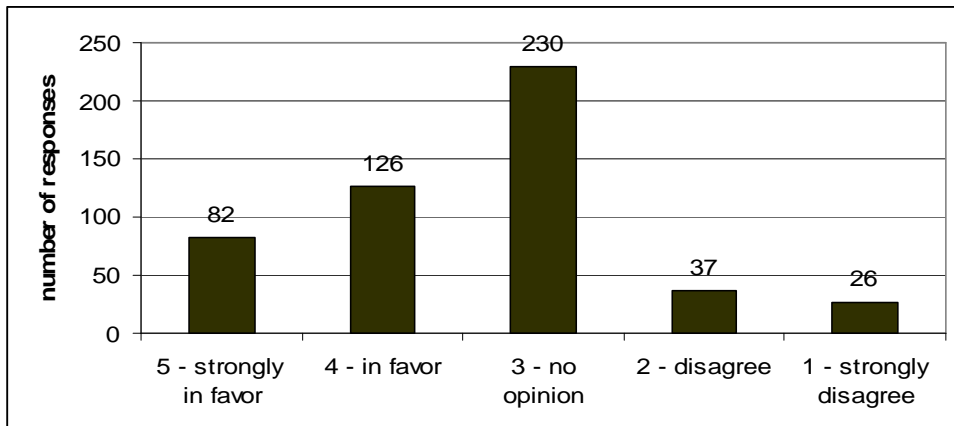
Move one or more Teacher Institute Days before students start the school year. (n=500)



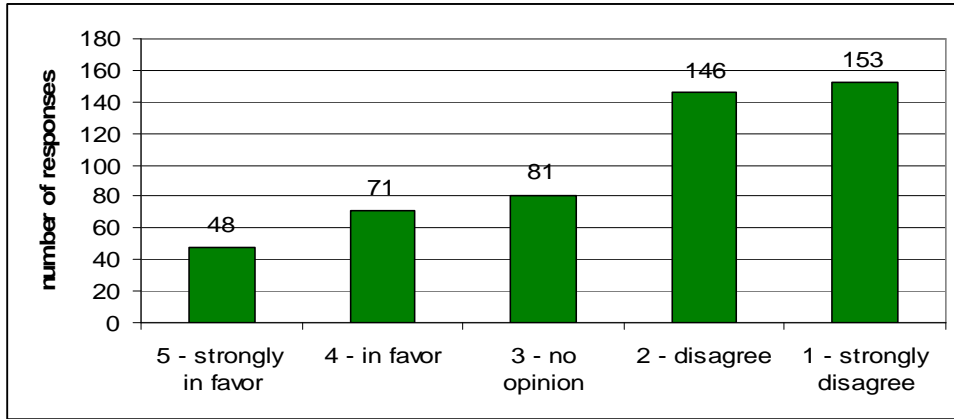
Thanksgiving break should be only Thursday and Friday. (n=499)



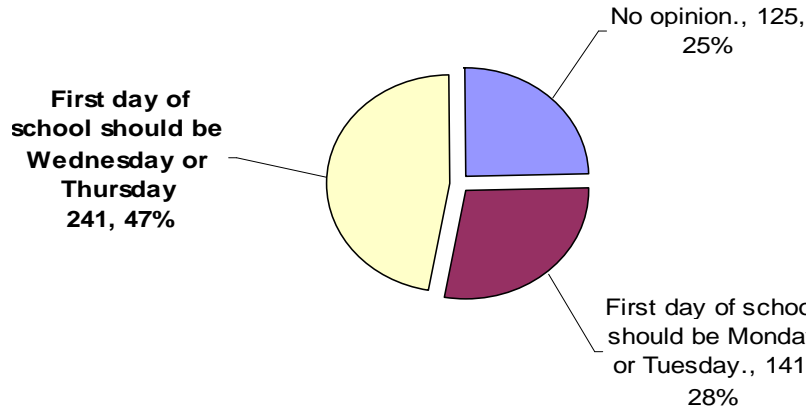
Approve school calendars 18 months in advance. (Currently the school calendar is approved 6 months in advance). (n=501)



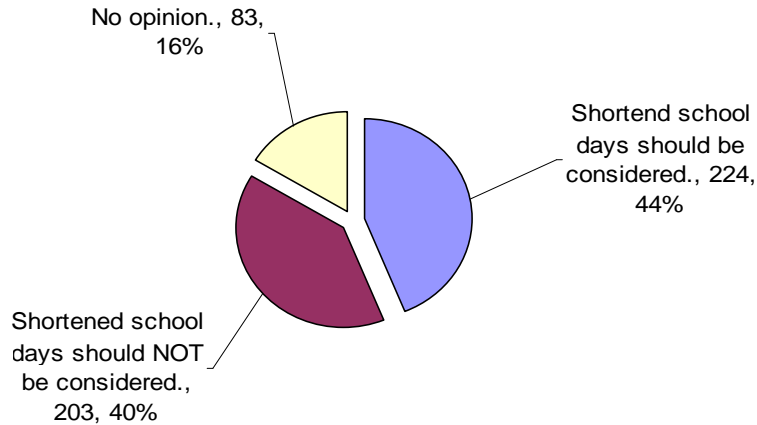
Winter break should be less than 10 days. (n=499)



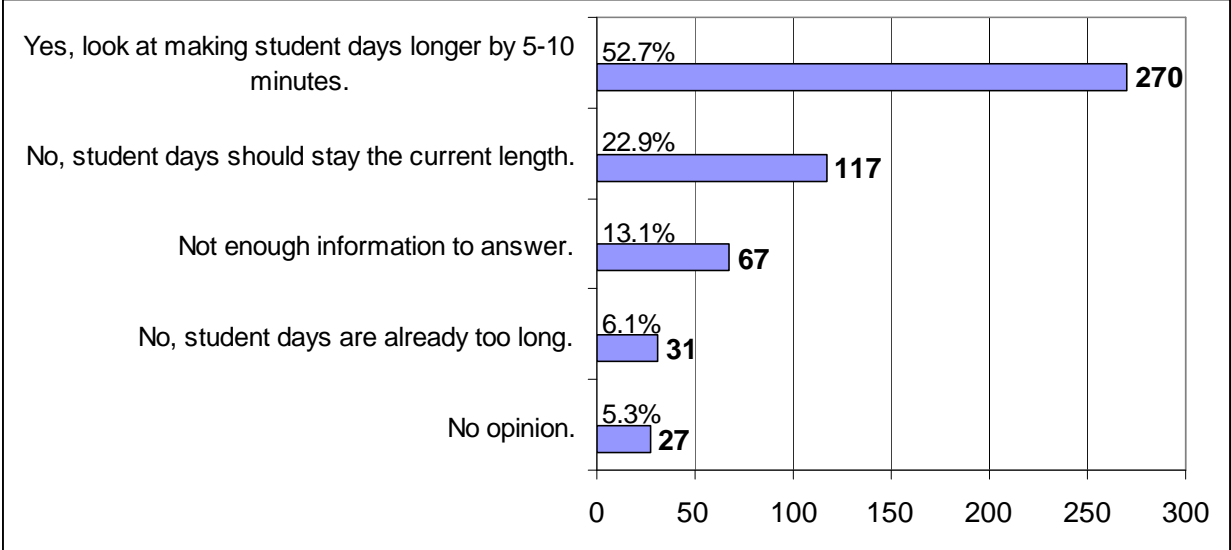
Question 9: Historically, the District has started the school year on a Wednesday or Thursday to ease students into the start of school. Would you like the Board to consider starting earlier in the week (Monday or Tuesday)? (n=507)



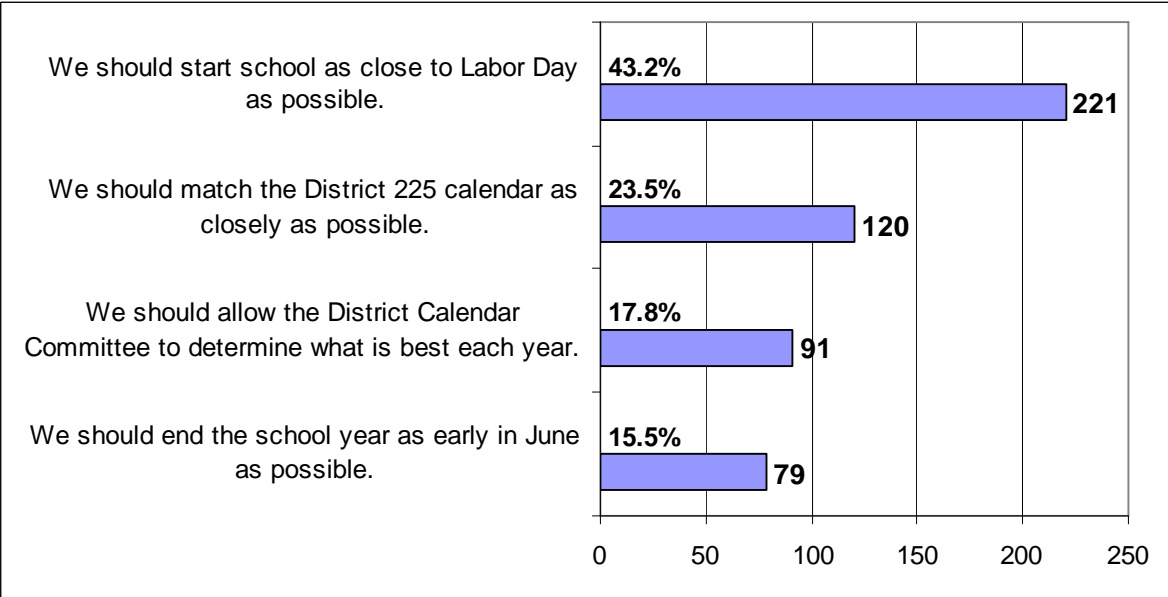
Question 10: An option to shorten the time between the first and last days of school would be to have students attend at least 3 hours on either student-teacher conference days or teacher institute days (up to 4 days in a calendar year). Would you be in favor of the Board of Education exploring this option? (n=509)



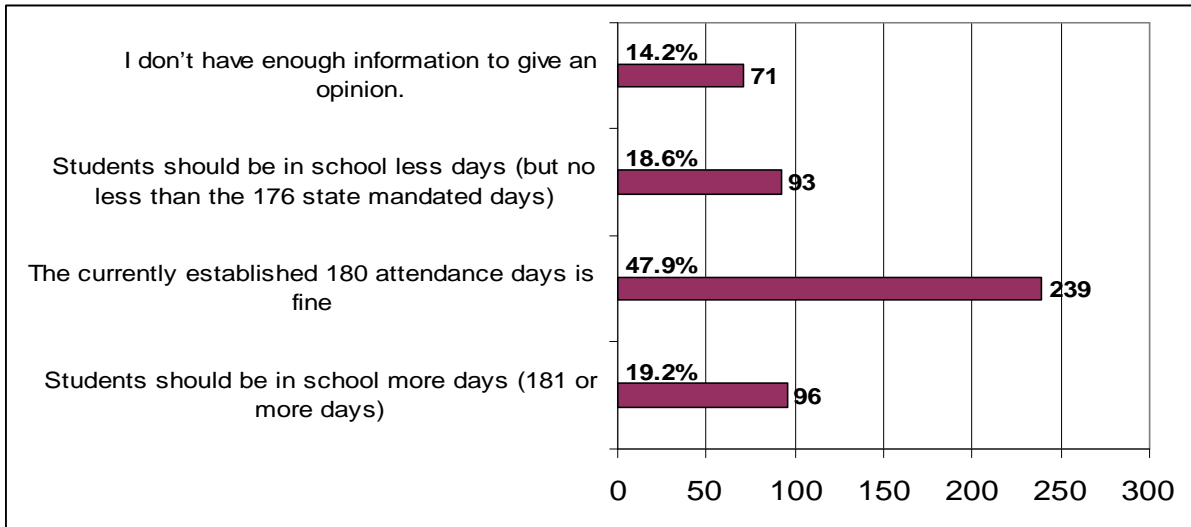
Question 11: Another option to shorten the time between the first and last day of school is to look at student-teacher time in minutes rather than in days. Would you be in favor of lengthening each school day by approximately 5-10 minutes, thereby decreasing the number of student days by approximately 3 days? (n=512)



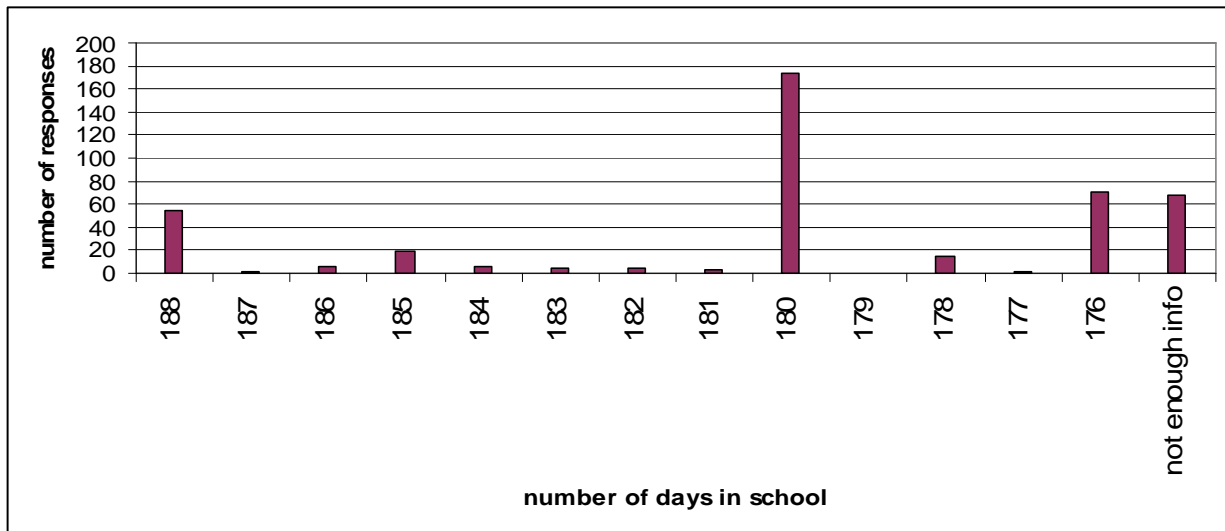
Question 12: Please select the MOST IMPORTANT guideline that you think the calendar committee should consider when creating and recommending our future school calendars. You may only select one. (n=511)



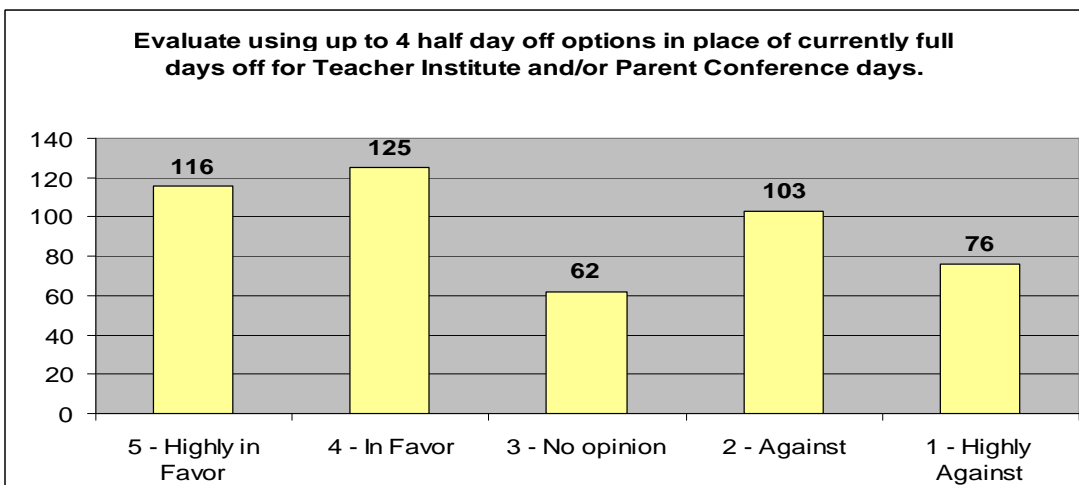
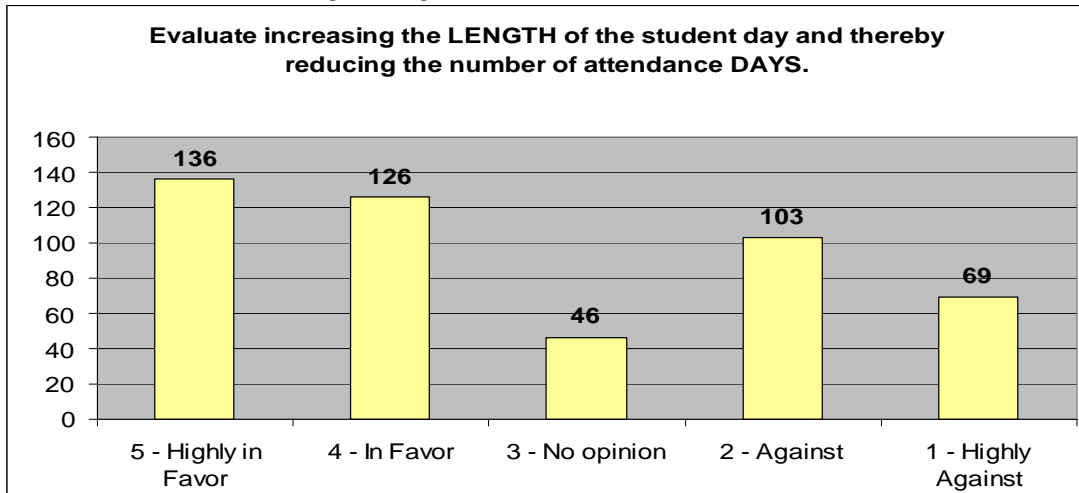
Question 13: When considering the information above about student attendance days [D34 and state policies/US averages and a sampling of other countries], please check the statement that most closely represents your view point. (n=499)



Question 14: Please indicate below the number of days you believe our students should be in school. (n=428)



Question 15: Please rate below whether or not you would be in favor of the School Board considering the following school calendar revisions that would affect the amount of student attendance time. (n=486)

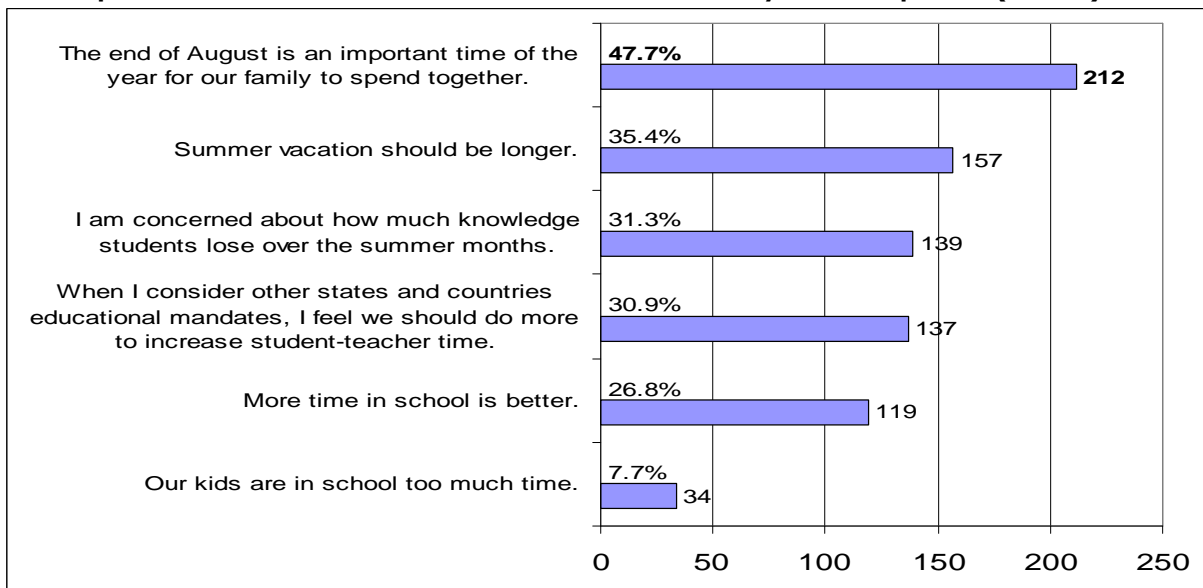


The categories of respondents' comments when then asked "Do you have other suggestions? (please specify)" are noted below. Comment detail is at the end of this report.

Type of Comment	Quantity of Comments
Less student time off during the school year	37 total
Less days off during the school year - teacher institute	11
Less days off during the school year - general	9
Less days off during the school year - religious holidays	9
Less days off during the school year - national holidays	5
Shorter winter break	3
Consider changes to how time is scheduled	26 total
Consider when days off are scheduled	9
Start closer to or after Labor Day	8
Half day support	5
Longer school day support	4

Educational quality as first concern	20 total
Consider education first - general	11
Look at more overall days/time with teachers	9
Concerns with changes to the calendar	18 total
No half days	9
Working parents' concerns	5
No longer days for students	3
Support of less student days in the school year	14 total
Reduce days that are not educationally relevant	9
Fewer school days needed	5
Consider other school calendars	9 total
Compare D34 with other schools	5
Match 225's calendar	4
Other Ideas and thoughts	21 total
Ideas - not calendar related	11
Ideas - calendar	6
Misc.	4

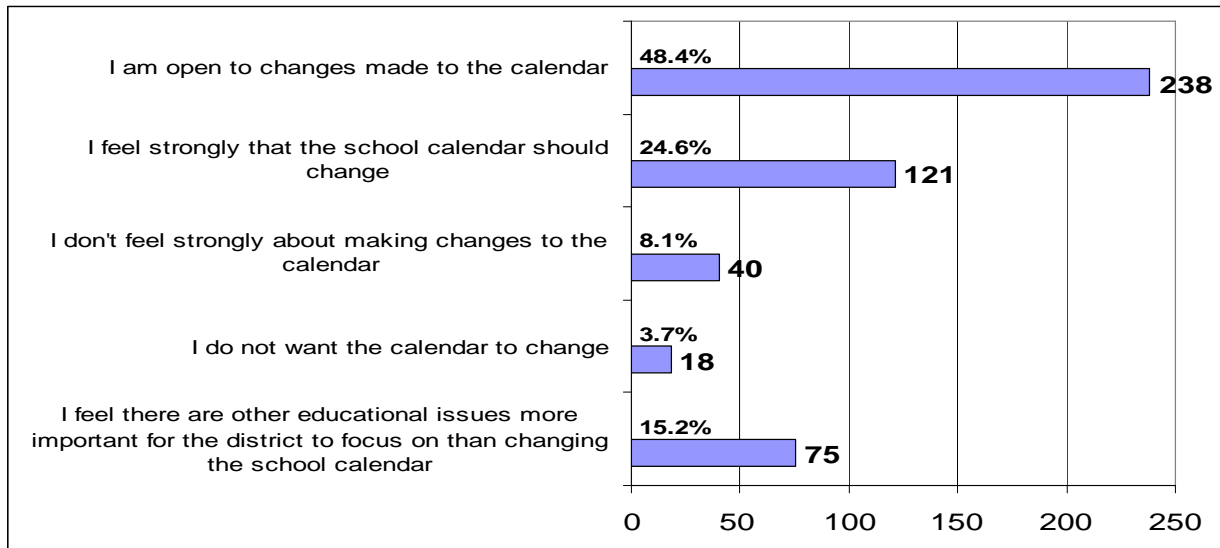
Question 16: When considering your feelings about how much time students spend in school, please check all statements below that match your viewpoint. (n=444)



The categories of respondents comments when then asked to fill in "other" are noted below. Comment detail is at the end of this report.

Type of Comment	Quantity of Comments
Consider how time is scheduled	31 total
Start school year closer to, or after, Labor Day	15
Support of summer - general	6
Consider when days off are scheduled	5
Longer school day support	3
School year should end earlier in June	2
Educational quality as first concern	21 total
Consider education first - general	13
Look at more overall days/time with teachers	6
Concern with losing loss of knowledge over the summer	2
Less time off during the school year	13 total
Less days off during the school year - general	12
Shorter winter break	1
Less days in the school year support	5 total
Reduce days that are not educationally relevant	4
Fewer school days needed	1
Concerns with changes to the calendar	5 total
No longer days for students	3
Support 180 days	2
Other Ideas and thoughts	17 total
Misc.	11
Various ideas	4

Question 17: After taking this survey about the District 34 student calendar, please again check the statement below that best describes your viewpoint about the calendar. (n=492)



Question 18: Do you have any additional thoughts to share with our PTA leaders regarding the District 34 school calendar? The **154** comments entered, can be categorized into the following groups:

Type of Comment	Quantity of Comments
Concerns with changes to the calendar	41 total
General concern with longer summer	14
Working parent concerns	14
Keep religious holidays	11
No longer days for students	1
No half days	1
Consider changes to how time is scheduled	36 total
Start school year closer to or after Labor Day	20
Consider when days off are scheduled	9
Support for a longer school day	3
Support of summer - general	2
Support for half days	2
Educational quality as first concern	23 total
Consider education first - general	17
Look at more overall days/time with teachers	6
Less student time off during the school year	20 total
Less days off during the school year - general	9
less days off during the school year - religious holidays	8
less days off during the school year - teacher institute	2
Shorter winter break	1
Less days in the school year support	14 total
Reduce days that are not educationally relevant	12
Fewer school days needed	2
Consider other school calendars	9 total
Match 225's calendar	5
Compare D34 with other schools	4
Comments, Questions, and Ideas	25 total
Various ideas	7
Miscellaneous	6
Questions	5
Thank you for the survey	7