

VARIOUS PLANS FOR EXTENDING  
THE  
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEAR

AN ABSTRACT OF  
A THESIS  
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
OF DANBURY STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

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April, 1963

The length of the school year in the United States has gradually increased throughout the past century to its present average length of 178 days. Proposals have been made that seem to justify serious consideration of operating our schools on some type of year-round basis. Many people believe that more time is needed in order to teach properly all the new aspects of the curriculum. Extending the school year might help shorten the time spent on review. School facilities and talents of the professional staff might be used to greater advantage if schools were operated year-round.

Among the various plans that have been considered or put into practice are the following:

The staggered four-quarter plan.--In this program the school year was divided into four quarters of twelve weeks each. The student body was divided into four groups, each group receiving their twelve week vacation at a different quarter. The school only closed for one four-week period each year. This plan allowed more pupils to use existing school facilities. The greatest problem with this plan was the extreme difficulty of administration.

The full-time four-quarter plan.--A variation of the above program in which pupils may voluntarily attend every quarter of the year has also been used. The chief disadvantage to this plan was that the pupils graduated at too early an age.

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The eleven-week four-quarter plan.--This interesting variation of the four-quarter plan has been suggested. The schools would operate on a year-round basis. There would be four eleven-week quarters with a two-week vacation between each quarter.

The voluntary summer program.--This plan has been a successful method of extending the school year. Originally of a remedial nature, recent years have seen the development of many enrichment courses and activities. This sometimes involves twelve-month contracts for teachers. The main problem with this plan is that in communities where it has been adopted it has not reached the majority of the student population.

The summer program for teachers.--Several communities are now offering teachers a twelve-month contract with opportunity for professional development and participation in curriculum planning in the summer months.

The 210-day school year.--This plan that has been proposed would provide for a longer school year by extending the regular schedule into the month of July.

The double-session extended school year plan.--This proposal suggests that communities faced with double-sessions increase their school year to 225 days in order to offer an equivalent number of teaching hours per year.

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If a school district becomes interested in the possibility of extending the school year, the first approach should be to determine the needs of the school in relation to the community. If thorough discussion points in the direction of an extension of the school year, various community organizations should be invited to join in further exploration of plans. If a plan emerges, this information must then be brought before the entire community. General community approval would signal the Board of Education to incorporate this plan into general school policy.