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School Starting Date History

Why does the school year start so early in August?

The short answer: To keep school calendars and vacations schedules together for families with students enrolled in the Etiwanda School District (grades TK-8) and the Chaffey Joint Union High School District (grades 9-12).

If you have any questions, please contact the Etiwanda School District at 909-803-3101, or contact Jeannie Duran at Jeannie_duran@etiwanda.org.

Background Information:

The schools of the Etiwanda School District provide an outstanding education for students in grades TK-8. Upon completion of 8th grade, students are enrolled in the high schools of the Chaffey Joint Union High School District. Etiwanda, Rancho Cucamonga and Los Osos High Schools provide service to the students who reside in the boundaries of the Etiwanda School District.

Our district has a long tradition of working collaboratively with the Chaffey district. While each district adopts a school calendar that meets its unique instructional needs, we try to match our calendars as closely as possible for the benefit of the families with students in both districts.

In 2007, the Board of Trustees of the Chaffey District voted to move the start date of their school year to the second week of August, effective in August 2009. The Board of Trustees of the Etiwanda School District voted to move to a similar school start date for families who have, or will have, children enrolled in both districts.

Why did the Chaffey district decide to move the start of school to early August?

The early start, or *Academic Calendar*, was approved by the Chaffey Board to benefit high school students in terms of assessment, instruction and learning. A few of the considerations were:

1. The Academic Calendar allows the entire first semester of high school to be completed by the Winter Recess. On the previous calendar, students would return after Winter Break and spend two or three weeks reviewing previously taught material and to prepare for and complete semester exams. Instruction on new material would not take place until the last week of January. With the new Academic Calendar, the first semester and finals are completed in December, so when students return in January they begin learning new material and don't have the "down time" of the traditional calendar.
2. High school students are required to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to graduate from high school. The test is given in March, regardless of when the school year starts. The Academic Calendar allows three extra weeks of instruction for students prior to taking the CAHSEE exam.
3. Advanced placement (AP) exams which give high school students credit for college courses occur on fixed dates in May each year. Many districts throughout the country have early August start dates. An early August start date allows three to four weeks of additional instruction prior to the AP exams compared to the previous calendar.

NOTE: The movement to an earlier start date does not provide an advantage for the state testing for Etiwanda students. The tests dates are based upon the first day of school. Starting school three weeks earlier moves state testing three weeks earlier.

When deciding to change to an early August start date, what factors did the Etiwanda School District consider?

1. Keeping families together. In any given year, about 30% of our families have students enrolled in the Etiwanda District and the Chaffey District. If Etiwanda kept the previous calendar and Chaffey moved to a new calendar, families would have less summer vacation time together. In August, high school students would be back in school while the elementary and middle school students were still on summer break. In June, high school students would be out of school while the younger students would still be finishing the school year. That would really reduce the number of days families could schedule vacations together.
2. Maximizing instructional time. If the schedules for both districts don't align substantially, parents may need to choose to take a student out of school to allow a family to have vacation time together. While students can complete work independently, it does not have the same educational benefit as classroom instruction.

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