

EICS and the Board of Trustees sincerely thank everyone for their comments on the draft school calendar. All comments and feedback received were recorded and taken into consideration when deciding on the 2009-10 school calendar. It is important to note that two significant underlying factors were considered throughout the decision making process.

**1. Busing and Transportation:**

Transportation using our own buses and drivers is provided to elementary students in Sherwood Park only. All other students are bused by public transportation (Strathcona) or by the public school system (Battle River in Camrose and Elk Island Public in Fort Saskatchewan and Vegreville). For EICS to provide and contract out busing to all of our communities it would cost an additional \$20,000 per day approximately.

**2. Standardize School Calendars Throughout the Division:**

EICS in previous years had to work within eight different school calendars. This meant that some communities had students in school while others did not – due to the busing situation mentioned above. With the new school calendars, EICS has standardized the Division and has cut its different calendars from eight to only four.

**How much feedback on the Calendars did the Board of Trustees receive?**

Feedback was solicited through an online survey, a comment form, by email, fax and phone. The response rate for the feedback included 250 online survey responses and 60 comments generated by the comment form, email, fax and phone.

**What kind of comments did the feedback include?**

The feedback can be categorized as follows:

Early Dismissal Wednesdays

November Fall Break

Early Christmas break

Early Start to School Year – August 31, 2009

Last Day of School – June 28, 2009

***Early Dismissal Wednesdays*** - Early dismissal will now be the first instructional Wednesday of every month for all schools in Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood Park and Vegreville. Students will be dismissed one hour early on dismissal day. The extra time created by removing early dismissal every Wednesday for Sherwood Park schools will be used to provide professional development days Division-wide. For example, social studies teachers can now get together to learn about curriculum and

share teaching techniques without having to hire a substitute teacher to cover their class. This means that teachers will not be taken out of their classes as often and students will have more time with their teachers.

**November Fall Break** – In order to standardize the school calendar, EICS had to align its busing with Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS), which schedules the November fall break. Other considerations include the increase in tendencies for families to take children out of school for fall holidays, as well as increasing the preparation time for teachers completing report cards – which will be issued after the fall break.

**Early Christmas Break** – Again, because of transportation considerations in all of our communities, the Christmas break schedule will begin December 21 with students returning to school on January 4, 2010. All schools within EICS will have the same schedule. In order to start the Christmas break later in the week, it would cost the Division up to \$20,000 per day to provide busing for our students in all communities – not to mention that EICS would be contracting out public school bus drivers and buses to provide the service – when otherwise they would be on their Christmas break.

**Start of School Year -**

The first day of school is scheduled for August 31, 2009 in order to accommodate the 2009 WorldSkills Event in Calgary from September 1-7, 2009. The Alberta government, because of the world-class event, has committed \$4 million to send students in Grades 9 and 10 to the competition.

By attending the WorldSkills competition, our students will have the opportunity to explore a variety of trades and technology occupations and learn from the best in the world. Our students will take part in Try-A-Trade Demonstrations – a hands-on look at some of the most in-demand occupations, as well as the Learning Opportunities and Career Pathways Showcase – an event with over 100 trade and technology focused employers, partners, and educational institutions. Students will also have the opportunity to interact with experienced Skills Ambassadors who will be presenting valuable information about different skills areas.

**What is the WorldSkills competition?**

WorldSkills 2009 will be the largest event to take place in Calgary since the 1988 Olympics. Held over four days every two years, WorldSkills promotes and displays skilled trades and technology careers to youth. WorldSkills International represents 49 countries and involves 45 skill categories, including plumbing, autobody repair, welding, landscape gardening, printing and web design.

More information on the 2009 WorldSkills event in Calgary or WorldSkills International, is available on the Alberta Education website at [www.education.alberta.ca](http://www.education.alberta.ca) under Department Information – News – Events. You can also follow the links below:

<http://www.education.alberta.ca/department/news/events/worldskills2009.aspx>  
<http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/825508/englishquestionandanswers.pdf>

***Last Day of School*** – The last day of school for next year is scheduled for Monday, June 28, 2009 because Diploma examinations are still being written up to, and including, the last day of school. Alberta Education is responsible for creating the schedule of Diploma examinations throughout the province, not individual school boards.

### **What is Professional Development and why do we have Division PD days?**

Professional Development equips teachers and other Division staff with the tools and knowledge they need to help students reach their full potential. PD also helps to maintain standards of excellence in teaching – giving our teachers the opportunity to collaborate and learn the best and most up-to-date teaching practices, while at the same time, giving our students access to the highest quality of learning.

In the past, due to the eight different school calendars, it wasn't easy for teachers and EICS staff to collaborate with each other. Instead, a small percentage of teachers took their turn participating in PD – thereby requiring substitute teachers at premium cost and significant time away from their students.

### **Some Professional Development Activities –**

Professional Development (PD) helps teachers to continually adapt to changing environments from new technology to new curriculum. Some PD activities will address the following:

#### **Changes to the Education Curriculum -**

Alberta Education is continually updating and revising the education curriculum in order to meet the shifting needs of students. As a result, teachers require PD in order to keep up with the changes and to learn the new curriculum.

Below are some of the curriculum changes over the next couple of years:

- French as a Second Language – High School
- Mathematics K-12
- Biology, Chemistry and Physics – Grade 12
- Career and Technology Studies
- Social Studies
- Science - Elementary

#### **Changes in Technology -**

Today's students are 21<sup>st</sup> century learners with access to technology and a constant flow of information.

For example: EICS schools are currently being outfitted with state-of-the-art technology – such as SmartBoard technology in classrooms. In order to teach using the SmartBoard and for students to get the full-benefit of learning with SmartBoard technology, teachers must know how to use the technology and how it can be applied to lessons and activities. Professional development will help teachers learn to teach with new technology.

### **Why did EICS change its school calendars?**

The main reason for changing the 2009-10 School Calendars was to reduce the number of school calendars throughout the Division, from eight calendars in previous years to the current four calendars. Fewer calendars enhance the ability to offer Division-wide professional development opportunities – enabling staff to provide our students with the most up-to-date instruction practices.

Working with fewer calendars reduces costs and improves efficiency with regard to busing and transportation.

### **What are some advantages to working with fewer school calendars?**

There are a number of advantages to having fewer school calendars, namely:

- Standardizes the Division – all students will have the same days off.
- Easier on parents with children attending different schools
- Creates efficiencies in scheduling and providing student busing
- More opportunities for professional development throughout the Division.

### **Where can I find the 2009-10 School Calendar?**

Copies of the 2009-10 School Calendar are available on the Division website at [www.eics.ab.ca](http://www.eics.ab.ca) under What's New. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call the Education Centre and a 2009-10 Calendar will be emailed, faxed or mailed to you.

### **Can I compare the new School Calendar with this year's calendar?**

This year's School Calendars (2008-09), as well as previous years, are available on the EICS website at [www.eics.ab.ca](http://www.eics.ab.ca) under Schools – School Calendars.