PARKLAND
SCHOOL DIVISION

# MEMORANDUM

PARKLAND SCHOOL DIVISION	December 17, 2024 Regular Board Meeting				
то	Board of Trustees				
FROM	Shauna Boyce, Superintendent				
ORIGINATOR	Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent				
GOVERNANCE POLICY	Board Policy 1: Division Foundational Statements Board Policy 2: Role of the Board Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent				
ADDITIONAL REFERENCE	BP 1: Vision, Foundational Statements BP 2: Education Planning and Programming AP 114: School Day and Year				
SUBJECT	2025-2026 SCHOOL CALENDAR				

#### PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

#### BACKGROUND

The school-year calendar shall generally be approved by the Superintendent no later than March 1st of the previous year for that calendar. This report is in support of this responsibility.

#### **REPORT SUMMARY**

Parkland School Division continues to support school-based Professional Development opportunities that provide schools with the opportunity to focus on Division Priorities and their Education Plans. Proposed amendments to the calendar accommodate the strong interests represented through stakeholder feedback.

In total, 1,571 respondents provided feedback to the calendar survey, between November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 and December 6, 2024. This year, Evergreen Catholic provided their own survey to their stakeholders.

The report includes a thematic breakdown of the comments received, with examples.

The 2025-2026 Calendar is presented in a visual format, at the end of the report.

Administration would be happy to answer any questions.

SJ:kz



# 2024-2025 PARKLAND SCHOOL DIVISION CALENDAR DECEMBER 17, 2024

Presented to the Board of Trustees, December 17, 2024 Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent, Education and System Services

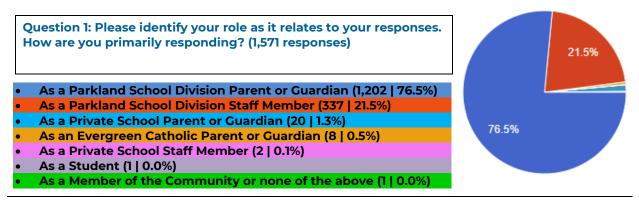
Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.

#### BACKGROUND

- 1. PSD Executive generate a calendar survey well in advance of the approval of the next calendar.
- 2. The survey received feedback from 1,571 respondents. Last year saw 2,292 by the time the survey closed.
- 3. This calendar briefing note provides a summary of responses received prior to the approval of the school-year calendar for 2025-2026.
- 4. Based on the results from the survey, the proposed 2024-2025 Calendar shall include:
  - a. 194 Operational Days,
  - b. 181 Instructional Days,
  - c. 13 Non-Instructional Days, and
  - d. A reasonable balance of Semester Days (90/90 with one day for transition).
- 5. The Operational, Instructional and Non-Instructional Days are the same in quantity as for the 2024-2025 school year.
- 6. Participant emails were required for completion of the survey.
- 7. Evergreen Catholic Schools generated and distributed their own survey.

Alberta students in grades one through nine must have a minimum of 950 hours of instruction. High School students must receive a minimum of 1,000 hours of instruction.

#### SURVEY AFFILIATION



Parkland School Division Parent/Guardian responses continue to provide the majority of responses for this survey.

Our Calendar Survey indicated that 77% of respondents are familiar with calendar rationale, and only 23% opted for more information at the start of the survey. This is the same ratio as last year.

The calendar provides 181 days of learning between August and June. Staff require one day to close out the year, and so the end-date for students will be fixed at June 26th, with a non-instructional day placed on June 29<sup>th</sup>, and a non-operational day placed on Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Survey participants received the following information, prior to responding to an open-ended question:

- Starting the year after Labour Day, and ending before June 26th means that there is very little wiggle-room for determining breaks and non-instructional days;
- All students receive a minimum of 950 hours of instruction (1-9) and 1,000 hours of instruction (10-12); therefore
- altering or eliminating the Fall Break would mean an equivalent number of days would be set as non-operational throughout the year, and surveys have indicated strong support for this break (there is no reduction of days);
- Non-instructional (PD) days are critically important for training and staff purposes they are most appreciated at the beginning of the year; however
- High school semesters operate like an entire year within half of the year balancing the semesters (ideally the same number of days) is essential and the Diploma Examination schedule is provincially set.

Question: After reviewing the DRAFT Calendar for 2025-2026, are there any other items you would like us to consider?

# THOUGHTS SHARED BY PSD PARENTS

Survey respondents were tracked by email and 1,571 responded. Of those, 454 individuals provided commentary that was specific (not including remarks such as "no, thank you.").

1,117 respondents provided no concerns regarding the calendar (71.1% of respondents).

#### Appreciation for the Suggested Calendar

165 unique comments directly express positivity or favorability toward the calendar. (This excludes overlaps where sentiments about specific features, like starting after Labour Day or fall break, are already part of broader positive feedback.)

• 165 comments of 1,571 respondents or 10.5%

An engaged staff member shares: "This looks great!!! Thank you for the work that goes into this! What a great calendar!"

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

# Support for Starting School After Labour Day

Several respondents indicated appreciation for students starting after the Labour Day long weekend

• 78 comments of 1,571 respondents or 5%

An engaged parent shares: "Thank you for starting school after the September long weekend. It never made any sense to start school in August."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

#### Fall Break

The received feedback regarding Fall Break was mixed. Some support the break for family time or wellness, while others suggest eliminating or shortening it to prioritize instructional time or align better with other breaks. We previously surveyed staff directly on this matter.

• 92 comments Received of 1,571 or 5.9%

• 52 positive comments in favour of Fall Break of 92 or 57%

An engaged parent shares: "I think fall break is a great idea where it is. At this point of the year, illness is peaking, and this gives kids a chance to recover and take a break from being around one another sharing germs. Calendar looks great. Thank you for starting classes AFTER the long weekend in Sept."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

• 40 negative comments opposed to Fall Break of 92 or 43%

An engaged parent shares: "I do not agree with having a fall break. I do not think it is > necessary."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

### Alignment with Surrounding Divisions

We received a few comments noting the importance of alignment with other jurisdictions.

• 40 comments of 1,571 or 2.5%.

An engaged parent shares: "Please work with the other school boards - EPSB and ECSB specifically - to align Spring Break. It's incredibly frustrating when the breaks don't align. Not everyone that has students i.n PSD live in PSD. Some work for Edmonton boards, some have cousins, siblings, family members that follow the EPSB holiday schedule to help with childcare, etc"

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

#### **PD Scheduling Comments**

We received comments to align PD days with long weekends, or movement of specific dates for various reasons. A few comments asked for a reduction of PD Days.

- 105 comments received of 1,571 or 6.7%
- 24 comments asking for a reduction of days or 22.9% of the 105 comments / 1.5% of the total comments received.

An engaged parent shares: "The November PD day should be moved to Friday, Nov 7th, to align with fall break. Having a PD Day the Monday of one week and then a week off the next week is too disruptive to parents needing to plan childcare now that most people no longer work from home."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

#### Staff June End Date

We received a few concerns regarding the last day for staff set as Monday, June 29<sup>th</sup>. Notably, this item was separately surveyed for staff, and the majority of respondents indicated a preference for returning in June, rather than for shortening the Fall Break.

• 65 comments received of 1,571 or 4.1%



**An engaged parent shares:** "A few of the PD Days are questionable. For example, coming back after the weekend for a PD day on June 29<sup>th</sup> – a Monday. Students' last day should be the 25th and teachers' last day (the PD day) the 26th - a Friday."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

We surveyed staff specifically on this item, and the majority opted for the choice that meant returning on June 29<sup>th</sup>.

# **Concerns or Queries about Instructional Time**

Some respondents indicated a concern for meeting instructional time requirements, and spoke in favour of reducing non-instructional days.

• 15 comments of 1,571 or 1.0%

An engaged parent shares: "Get rid of fall break. It doesn't make sense to have a week off in November followed by two weeks off in December. Kids need more time in the classroom. PSD shouldn't be focused on only achieving the minimum standard of instructional hours. The division should be trying to ensure our students are receiving a higher quality education."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

# Spring Break Preferences

A few respondents shared a perspective that Spring Break is better when not connected to the Easter Weekend.

22 comments of 1,571 or 1.4%

An engaged parent shares: "If possible, please line up Spring Break with other divisions close to us (Sturgeon, St. Albert, Northern Gateway, Edmonton, etc.). When they aren't the same, families can't do trips together. Also, extracurricular activities are often canceled for Spring Break, so kids and families can truly get a break from everything."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

# Preference for Long Weekend Connection to PD Days

Some respondents expressed support for creating extended long weekends by combining PD days with holidays or other breaks for better family and childcare lifestyle planning.

- 28 comments of 1,571 or 1.8%
- 24 comments supportive, or 86%
- 4 comments unsupportive, or 14%

An engaged parent shares: "Don't combine PD days with a holiday. It leaves us with long weekends that only the wealthier families can afford to go away on. Holiday+PD=super expensive to do anything."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

#### **Inclusivity and Multifaith Considerations**

A few respondents indicated the importance of connecting non-instructional days within the framework of multifaith considerations.

• 6 comments of 1,571 or 0.4%

An engaged parent shares: "Consideration of recognition of Multifaith days like other large divisions such as EPSB to acknowledge our diverse and changing demographics."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]

#### Feedback Process

A few stakeholders expressed dismay that the open-ended survey process meant that the calendar was predetermined, or did not provide choice. Notably, the open-ended survey was meant to provide the greatest latitude for feedback.

• 8 comments of 1,571 or 0.5%

**An engaged parent shares:** "In previous years, we were given choices per consideration. This year it looks like decisions have been made without our feedback. That is disappointing."

[Source: 2025-2026 Calendar Survey]



Month	Total Days	STAT	NON-OP	NON-INST	Operational	Instructional	Total
8	4			4	4	0	0
9	22	1	1	1	20	19	19
10	23	1			22	22	41
11	20	1	4	1	15	14	55
12	23	2	6		15	15	70
1	22	1	1	1	20	19	89
2	20	1		3	19	16	105
3	22		2	1	20	19	124
4	22	2	2		18	18	142
5	21	1		1	20	19	161
6	22		1	1	21	20	181
Totals	221	10	17	13	194	181	