



Standing Committee Meeting

Monday, February 12, 2024

Trustee Board Room

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558

Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

AGENDA: Immediately following Board Meeting

1. Call to Order
2. Meeting Roll Call
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Reports from Staff:

5. [School Year Calendar 2024-2025](#)

6. Adjournment

BE YOU. BE EXCELLENT.



EXECUTIVE REPORT TO BOARD

TO: BOARD

FROM: Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, Director of Education

DATE: February 12, 2024

PREPARED BY: Simon Goodacre, Superintendent of Student Achievement

RE: 2024-25 Draft School Year Calendars

Action X

Monitoring

Recommended Action:

That the draft 2024-25 School Year Calendars be approved for submission to the Ministry of Education.

Background:

The 2024-25 School Year Calendars (Appendix – 1 and 2) are prepared in consultation with the School Year Calendar Advisory Committee, the public, the co-terminus school board, and neighbouring boards, and are endorsed by Executive Council. The calendars meet all Ministry requirements. Specifically, the calendars comply with Ontario Regulation 304, School Year Calendars, and Professional Activity (PA) Days.

O. Reg. 304, School Year Calendar, Professional Activity (PA) Days sets the requirements for preparation and submission of school year calendars to the Ministry. This includes a minimum of 194 school days between September 1 and June 30. In addition, Boards may designate up to seven (7) PA days and up to ten (10) examination days which leaves 187 instructional days.

O. Reg 304 (4) also establishes holidays for the school year. The following chart outlines the holidays for the 2024-2025 school year aligned to this regulation.

Holidays as determined by Reg. 304	2024-25 School Year
Labour Day	September 2, 2024
Thanksgiving Day	October 14, 2024
Winter Break	December 23, 2024 – January 3, 2025
Family day	February 17, 2025
Mid-Winter Break	March 10 to March 14, 2025
Good Friday	April 18, 2025
Easter Monday	April 21, 2025
Victoria Day	May 19, 2025

The School Year Calendar Advisory Committee met on October 19th, November 9th, 2023, and January 24th, 2024, to review and provide feedback for consideration in the development of the School Year Calendar. The School Year Calendar Advisory Committee consists of members representing: Elementary and Secondary Principals (HWPC); Elementary and Secondary Teachers (HWETL, OSSTF, HWOTL), English as a Second Language Instructors (ESL); Parents (Parent Involvement Committee, Home & School Association); Educational Assistants, Child and Youth Practitioners (COPE), Early Childhood Educators (HWDECEL), School Office and Technical Workers (OCTU), Maintenance and Caretaking staff (CUPE) and Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP).

As directed by the Board, public consultation took place from December 20th, 2023, and January 17th, 2024, to receive community feedback regarding the draft calendars. The consultation involved both the traditional survey as well as the EngageHWDSB platform. To promote participation, the survey was promoted through the Student Senate, School Councils, and the Parent Involvement Committee; individual schools were also asked to promote the consultation in school newsletters. A School Messenger notification was sent to all families regarding the consultation.

Consultation Report

In total, 2333 responses were received from parents/guardians/ caregivers (88%), HWDSB employee (9%), students (3%) and the community (1%). The results were compiled by the HWDSB Research & Analytics Department and are available for review (Appendix – 3). While overall support for the draft calendars was strong, there was a noticeable decline in support for the proposed September 3rd Professional Activity Day. Comments regarding this proposed date indicated that it was difficult to arrange childcare for a single day after Labour Day and that it was more difficult for some parents to have time off from employment.

Financial Implications

There is an additional cost to the HWDSB when Professional Activity Days differ between co-terminus school boards. Consultation between co-terminus boards occurs in an attempt to align as many Professional Activity Days as possible.

Proposed Change to Draft Calendar

Listening to the concerns of families in the consultation and consideration of additional financial cost, a revision to the original draft calendar is proposed. It is recommended that the Professional Activity Day on Tuesday September 3rd be moved to Friday September 20th. This would be in alignment with the co-terminus board. It is also recommended that the Friday November 29th Professional Activity Day be moved to Friday November 22nd, this change is also to ensure alignment with the co-terminus board.

Both the elementary and secondary school year calendars are endorsed by Executive Council.

Key Dates:

Elementary

First day of instruction for students	Tuesday September 3, 2024
Last day of instruction for students	Thursday June 26, 2025

Secondary

Semester 1	
First day of instruction for students	Tuesday September 3, 2024
Last day of instruction for students	Thursday January 22, 2025
Examination Dates	Thursday, January 23 – Wednesday, January 29, 2025
Semester 2	
First day of instruction for students	Friday, January 31, 2025
Last day of instruction for students	Wednesday June 18, 2025
Examination Dates	Thursday June 19 – Wednesday June 25, 2025

Professional Activity (PA) Days:

School boards must dedicate three (3) PA days to provincial education priorities and may provide up to four (4) additional PA days per school year.

Dates for Professional Activity (PA) days have been determined to prioritize timely professional learning opportunities that adhere to provincial requirements including the completion of any required programs and legislated training.

For the 2024-25 school year, the Ministry of Education has not provided information regarding the topics for the required Ministry priority Professional Activity Days. We anticipate receiving further information this spring.

PA days will also focus on the Continuous Learning & Improvement Process. Educators will engage in professional learning at the beginning, middle and end of the school year to review student data, complete reporting, identify student needs and skill gaps as well as plan for purposeful instruction to address these needs. Learning about human rights, anti-racism/anti-oppression and Indigenous Education will be applied in an integrated manner across all professional learning.

Summary of PA Days in Elementary and Secondary

ELEMENTARY	FOCUS	SECONDARY	FOCUS
Friday September 20	Ministry Priority Day	Friday September 20	Ministry Priority Day
Friday, November 1	Ministry Priority Day	Friday, November 1	Ministry Priority Day


Friday, November 22	Student Progress Reporting (Interview Day)	Friday, November 22	School Improvement Planning
Friday, January 24	Assessment, Evaluation & Reporting	Thursday, January 30	Semester Turnaround and Student Success Planning
Friday, February 28	Ministry Priority Day	Friday, February 28	Ministry Priority Day
Friday, June 6	Assessment, Evaluation & Reporting	Thursday, June 26	Semester Turnaround and Student Success Planning
Friday, June 27*	School Improvement Planning	Friday, June 27*	School Improvement Planning

Bold topics are Ministry required.

All PA dates currently align with the draft HWCDSB school year calendar except for those indicated with an asterisk *

School Year Calendar and Days of Observances Consultation

The consultation in this report is specific to the 2024-2025 school year calendar. A separate consultation process will be conducted throughout this school year regarding the school year calendar, days of observances, and the Religious Accommodation Procedure. A report on this separate consultation will be present to the Board of Trustees in June 2024.

Legend ► H – Holiday E – Scheduled Examination Day P – Professional Activity Day B – Board Designated Holiday  Half Day

Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1 st Week					2 nd Week					3 rd Week					4 th Week					5 th Week				
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
August 2024							1	2	5 H	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30
September 2024	19	1		2 H	3 FD	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20 P	23	24	25	26	27	30				
October 2024	22	0			1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14 H	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31	
November 2024	19	2						1 P	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22 P	25	26	27	28	29
December 2024	15			2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23 B	24 B	25 B	26 B	27 B	30 B	31 B			
January 2025	14	1	5			1 B	2 B	3 B	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23 E	24 E	27 E	28 E	29 E	30 P	31 FD
February 2025	18	1		3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17 H	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28 P					
March 2025	16			3	4	5	6	7	10 B	11 B	12 B	13 B	14 B	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28	31				
April 2025	20				1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18 H	21 H	22	23	24	25	28	29	30		
May 2025	21						1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19 H	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30
June 2025	13	2	5	2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19 E	20 E	23 E	24 E	25 E	26 P	27 P	30 B				
July 2025					1 H	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31	
TOTAL	177	7	10	Note: The 2024-2025 calendar provides for 195 possible school days between September 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days																								

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				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					
August 2024							1	2	5	6	7	8	9																				
September 2024	19	1		2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30									
October 2024	21	0			1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31						
November 2024	20	2						1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29					
December 2024	15			2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30	31								
January 2025	19	1				1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31					
February 2025	18	1		3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28										
March 2025	16			3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28	31									
April 2025	20				1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30							
May 2025	21						1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30					
June 2025	18	2		2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30									
July 2025					1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31						
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Appendix –3

**2024-2025 School Year Calendar
Summary of Consultation Findings. January, 2024****Purpose of Consultation**

Every year, school boards across Ontario must submit school year calendars to the Ministry of Education for approval. According to Regulation 304, school board calendars for elementary and secondary schools must include 194 school days (including seven Professional Activity Days) between September 1 and June 30, with up to 10 days designated as examination days for secondary schools.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) asked members of the public to comment on the Draft 2024-2025 School Year Elementary and Secondary Calendars through the completion of an online survey and the EngageHWDSB platform. The consultation ran from December 20th, 2023, until January 17th, 2024, and garnered a total of 2333 responses. The survey asked respondents:

- a) whether or not they agree with the proposed dates in the elementary and secondary calendars, and
- b) to comment on each of the key dates.

The EngageHWDSB calendar project was visited by approximately 2,700 people. On the site, visitors were able to access draft versions of the elementary and secondary calendars, and to provide additional feedback on the proposed dates. The calendars were downloaded 748 times (elementary: 543; secondary: 205).

Respondent Characteristics

The largest number of responses came from parents/guardians (n = 2058, 88%), while 9% (n = 198) came from HWDSB staff members, 3% (n = 60) came from HWDSB students, and 1% (n = 12) came from community groups/members.

2100 respondents (93% of those who answered) indicated they had children attending an HWDSB school, whereas 159 responses (7%) were from respondents who indicated they did not have children in an HWDSB school. 74 respondents did not provide an answer to this question.

When asked which calendar they would like to provide feedback on, 75% (n = 1732) indicated elementary. 25% (n = 564) indicated secondary.

Of note, this year's survey response rate increased 77% over last year's, while the demographic makeup shifted dramatically. Whereas last year the number of respondents who identified themselves as parents/guardians was almost the same as the number who identified as staff members (47% n = 612 and 44% n = 577 respectively), this year those numbers were 88% (n = 2058) and 9% (198). Similarly, last

year 63% of respondents indicated that they had children attending an HWDSB school compared to 93% this year.

Summary of Findings

In keeping with principles of equality, equity, and non-discrimination, we have examined the consultation responses through an equity lens. From this perspective, our findings elevate voices that might otherwise be overwhelmed by a statistical majority.

Elementary

Members of the public were invited to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with key dates in the draft Elementary School Year Calendar. The following is a summary of the feedback:

Table 1. Results for Elementary Calendar Dates

	Total # of responses	Agree	Disagree
Start date for students: September 4, 2024	1591	73% (n = 1154)	27% (n = 437)
End Date for students: June 26, 2025	1581	88% (n = 1392)	12% (n = 189)
PA Day 1: September 3, 2024 – Ministry Priority Day	1582	69% (n = 1087)	31% (n = 495)
PA Day 2: November 1, 2024 – Ministry Priority Day	1577	89% (n = 1408)	11% (n = 169)
PA Day 3: November 22, 2024 – Family, Caregiver, Guardian Interviews	1573	89% (n = 1404)	11% (n = 169)
PA Day 4: January 24, 2025 – Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting	1575	94% (n = 1485)	6% (n = 90)
PA Day 5: February 28, 2025 – Ministry Priority Day	1575	89% (n = 1403)	11% (n = 172)
PA Day 6: June 6, 2025 – Ministry Priority Day	1577	93% (n = 1465)	7% (n = 112)
PA Day 7: June 27, 2025 – School Improvement Planning	1580	89% (n = 1402)	11% (n = 178)

Elementary Calendar Comments

Members of the public were further invited to offer comments regarding each of the key dates in the Elementary Calendar. Of these dates, the proposed **Start Date (September 4)** for students generated the most feedback.

Although a minority of the total respondents, those who indicated that they disagreed with the proposed start date were mainly concerned with childcare and difficulties for working parents. Parents highlighted that they need to return to work after Labour Day, and that finding one day of childcare would be difficult and expensive – especially considering that many will have already paid for childcare during the summer. Multiple parents commented that camps are not a childcare option after Labour Day, and that it is difficult to request a vacation day from their employer after the long weekend. A number of respondents citing childcare challenges linked their objections to the proposed start date to the past practice of starting school the day after Labour Day, arguing that the Tuesday is the expected and traditional start date, and aligns with other school boards. Others questioned the logic of a PA day before the school year has begun, and suggested students would be better served by a PA day later in the year.

Some respondents who commented on the proposed start date for students argued that a midweek start makes the transition to a school schedule difficult, particularly for kindergarten students, whose start times would be delayed until the end of the week; however, other respondents suggested that a Wednesday start would provide time for students to adjust and ease back into a school routine, and welcomed time off after the holiday weekend to prepare for the school year.

The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed elementary **End Date (June 26)**. Of those who disagreed, the most common suggestion was for the date to be moved to a Friday. Most respondents favouring a Friday end date suggested June 27th, with multiple parents citing childcare concerns. Others suggested June 20th. Among other comments, some respondents wanted school to end earlier. A smaller number considered the end date too early.

There are predictable similarities in the comments provided for the proposed elementary start date and **PA Day 1 (September 3)** as they are interrelated. A majority of respondents agreed with these two dates, but they had the highest levels of disagreement (27% and 31%). Childcare concerns again were the main consideration. Numerous respondents who disagreed with the PA Day 1 date suggested moving it later in September, or further into the school year. Some respondents argued that staff preparations should take place before school starts; however, others were appreciative of the time the proposed PA day would afford teachers for preparation.

Reaction to the proposed dates for PA Days 2-7 was largely supportive (89% or higher). Of the respondents who commented on **PA Day 2 (November 1)**, many voiced their support for scheduling it the day after Halloween – a suggestion we heard in last year’s consultation. However, slightly more respondents suggested that PA Days 2 and 3 are scheduled too closely together. Numerous respondents indicated that they would like to see PA Day 2 moved to October, with some suggesting it be attached to the Thanksgiving weekend.

In keeping with the comments regarding PA Day 2, the most frequent criticism of the placement of **PA Day 3 (November 22)** was that it is too close to PA Day 2. With respect to the content of PA Day 3, multiple respondents expressed support for the day being used for parent/guardian – teacher interviews, reflective of the majority (82%) of respondents from last year’s consultation who agreed that a PA day should be allocated for interviews.

Comments on the proposed dates for PA Days 4 and 5 were mixed. Numerous respondents suggested that **PA Day 4 (January 24)** is scheduled too closely to Winter Break. Similarly, numerous respondents commented that **PA Day 5 (February 28)** is scheduled too closely to March Break and Family Day, with some suggesting that PA Day 5 be moved to April or May to spread out the time off. Other respondents, however, commented that they would like to see PA days attached to holidays, suggesting that PA Day 5 be adjacent to Family Day or March Break.

Of respondents who commented on PA Days 6 and 7, some suggested that **PA Day 6 (June 6)** falls too closely to the end of the year and would be better situated in May. Respondents made similar comments regarding **PA Day 7 (June 27)**, wondering what value it would be at that time and requesting that the school year not end early – some citing childcare concerns.

Secondary

Members of the public were invited to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with key dates in the draft Secondary School Year Calendar. The following is a summary of the feedback:

Table 2. Results for Secondary Calendar Dates

	Total # of responses	Agree	Disagree
Semester 1 Start Date for students: September 4, 2024	508	79% (n = 401)	21% (n = 107)
Semester 1 End Date for students: January 22, 2025	502	93% (n = 468)	7% (n = 34)
Semester 1 Exam Days: January 23, 24, 27, 28, 29 2025	499	92% (n = 461)	8% (n = 38)
PA Day 1:	501	75%	25%

September 3, 2024 – Ministry Priority Day		(n = 376)	(n = 125)
PA Day 2: November 1, 2024 – Ministry Priority Day	502	91% (n = 455)	9% (n = 47)
PA Day 3: November 22, 2024 – School Improvement Planning	499	87% (n = 434)	13% (n = 65)
PA Day 4: January 30, 2025 – Semester Turnaround and Student Success Planning	501	90% (n = 453)	10% (n = 48)
Semester 2 Start Date for Students: January 31, 2025	442	74% (n = 327)	26% (n = 115)
Semester 2 End Date for Students: June 18, 2025	440	95% (n = 418)	5% (n = 22)
Semester 2 Exam Days: June 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 2025	436	94% (n = 409)	6% (n = 27)
PA Day 5: February 28, 2025 – Ministry Priority Day	437	89% (n = 391)	11% (n = 46)
PA Day 6: June 26, 2025 – Semester Turnaround and Student Success Planning	439	92% (n = 403)	8% (n = 36)
PA Day 7: June 27, 2025 – School Improvement Planning	438	92% (n = 405)	8% (n = 33)

Secondary Calendar Comments

Response numbers for the Secondary Calendar were significantly lower than those for the Elementary Calendar; however, there were some commonalities. Of note, the proposed dates with the highest levels of disagreement were similar for both – **PA Day 1** and the **Start Date** – with only the **Semester 2 Start Date** registering more disagreement on the Secondary calendar.

Although a minority of total respondents, of those commenting on the **Semester 1 Start Date (September 4)**, a majority wanted the school year to begin on September 3rd for students. These sentiments are reflected in the comments regarding **PA Day 1 (September 3)**. Some respondents questioned the logic of a PA day to start the year and suggested students would be better served by a later PA day. A small number indicated that they liked the preparation time provided by an early PA day, while others suggested the start date be pushed back even further.

The remaining Semester 1 dates (**Semester 1 End Date, Semester 1 Exam Days, PA Day 2, PA Day 3, PA Day 4**) received high approval levels – near or above 90%. Some respondents commented that Semester 1 should end on January 24th to complete the week and provide students more time before exams. Respondents also suggested that the Semester 1 exams all be scheduled in one week. With respect to **PA Day 2 (November 1)**, some respondents suggested it be adjacent to Thanksgiving. Numerous others

commented that PA Day 2 is scheduled too closely to **PA Day 3 (November 22)** or that there should not be two PA Days in the month.

The proposed placement of **PA Day 4 (January 30)** was approved by 90% of respondents; however, of those who provided feedback, a majority commented that it should be scheduled on the Friday of the week as opposed to Thursday so that students could have a Monday start for Semester 2.

These comments correlate with respondent criticism of the proposed **Semester 2 Start Date for Students (January 31)**. Over 70% of respondents who commented on the Semester 2 start date questioned the Friday date and/or suggested that the semester start on the Monday.

There was not a considerable amount of respondent comments on Semester 2 dates apart from the Start Date. Some respondents suggested that the **Semester 2 End Date for Students (June 18)** be placed on a Friday and that one week be allotted for exams, giving time to study before the exam week. Respondent comments regarding **PA Day 5 (February 28)** concerned its proximity to other holidays, with some respondents suggesting it is scheduled too closely to Family Day. A larger number wanted PA Day 5 adjacent to Family Day or March Break. A small number of respondents commented on **PA Days 6 (June 26)** and **7 (June 27)**, mainly arguing that the days would be better used during the school year.

Additional Comments

Finally, the public was invited to enter any general comments about the draft Elementary and Secondary calendars. There is considerable overlap between the most frequently addressed topics in response to this question, e.g., school start date for students, childcare, PA day concerns, and respondent comments on individual dates above.

However, respondents also used this opportunity to bring up concerns not covered previously in the questions we posed.

Multiple respondents used the open-ended responses to indicate their support for the proposed calendars. Some respondents wanted to see the elementary and secondary calendars aligned so PA days fall on the same days across the Board or be aligned with other school boards. Numerous respondents commented on the start date for Winter Break; however, these comments were divided between support for starting the break earlier, or having the break extend longer into January. A few respondents commented that the calendar should consider prominent non-Christian holidays to be inclusive of students and staff. Eid and Diwali were specifically mentioned. Linking calendar planning with daily schedules, a number of respondents commented on daily start times for secondary schools suggesting that students would benefit from later bell times.