

Proposed 2016-17 Calendar -- Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Fort Bend ISD having to add instructional minutes into the 2016-17 District Calendar?

House Bill 2610, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature, amended the Texas Education Code to require a minimum of 75,600 instructional minutes, rather than the former requirement of 180 days of instruction.

The current 2015-16 calendar contains a total of 73,500 minutes, a shortage of 2,100 minutes or equivalent to 5 days of instruction. If FBISD developed a calendar similar to the one we have now, but did not add minutes to the day, the District would have to add 5 days to the calendar. As a result, the Calendar Committee opted to recommend 20 additional minutes of daily instruction for all three levels **and** to increase the number of instructional days from 175 to 176.

Why did the Calendar Committee recommend adding 20 minutes to the school day, instead of adding days to the calendar?

After much discussion, the Calendar Committee (made up of parents, teachers, community members and district administrators) determined it would be better to lengthen the school day than to give up the full week holiday at Thanksgiving, the Fort Bend County Fair Holiday, as well as other days that would be needed to offset the number of instructional minutes now being required. Fort Bend County Fair Day and the week at Thanksgiving are long-standing traditions, and have historically been popular in our community. During the community feedback process going on now, we welcome all feedback.

The committee was also attempting to balance the length of both the fall and spring semester without extending the last day of school further into June. This calendar also does not force secondary students to take finals after the winter holidays caused by extending the first semester end date into January.

In addition to these practical concerns, the administration and committee have also considered the instructional benefits of lengthening the school day 20 minutes.

How would the days be lengthened by 20 minutes? Would they be added at the beginning or end of the day?

Following the adoption of the 2016-17 District Calendar, a separate group of stakeholders (including campus leaders, curriculum and transportation departments) will determine the exact start and stop times for all levels.

The state-mandated 75,600 minutes includes intermissions and recess.

Why can't Fort Bend ISD just start the school year in early or mid-August?

The first day of school is determined by the state. Fort Bend ISD does not have the option to begin the school year earlier.

Bad weather makeup days are rarely used. Why is the District choosing to build them into the 2016-17 Calendar?

Past calendars have been required to publish two days to be used in the event of bad weather cancellation. The new state law allows teachers and students to forego making up days for inclement

weather if enough minutes are developed into the calendar at the onset. Those makeup days such as Good Friday, Memorial Day, adding a Saturday or prolonging the school year, have been very unpopular with our constituents.

Would the extra instructional minutes affect teacher contracts?

Currently, FBISD students attend school for 420 minutes each day and teachers are on contract for 480 minutes daily. The instructional day would increase to 440 minutes and the teacher contract time would remain the same at 480 minutes.

What next? What will happen after the public feedback process ends?

In early January, District administrators and the Calendar Committee will be reviewing proposed and/or approved 2016-17 calendars from other Region IV districts to compare how neighboring districts are reacting to the new requirements, and specifically, how they are using their respective calendar days to add the required additional minutes.

Once the public feedback process ends on January 7, District administrators will take all feedback into consideration before asking the Board of Trustees to approve the 2016-17 Calendar.