

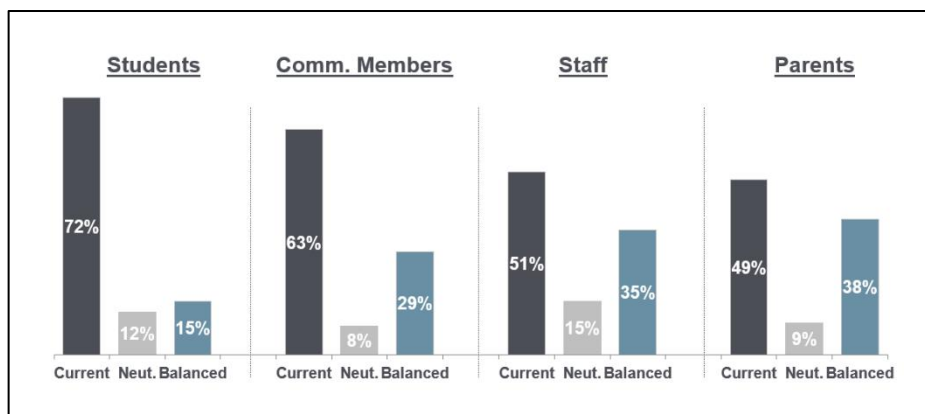
April 12, 2022

TO: North Thurston Public Schools
FR: Strategies 360 Research
RE: Community Preferences Regarding a Balanced Calendar

A recent non-representative community survey¹ finds that members of the North Thurston Public Schools community prefer to keep the current academic calendar rather than transition to a balanced calendar. The survey represents the opinions of over 5,000 residents who participated in the survey – most of whom are students, parents, and teachers – and does not necessarily reflect the views of all residents across the district. Still, it is clear that a transition to a balanced calendar would go against the preferences of a majority of these respondents.

KEY FINDINGS

- ❖ **Profile of survey respondents.** This survey consists of 5,274 online interviews, with a majority of respondents identifying as parents or guardians (61%), teachers or staff (21%), students (23%), and/or other members of the community (11%). Respondents come from a mix of schools, including those at (or parents of students at) elementary (51%), middle (28%), and high schools (42%).
- ❖ **A majority of respondents prefer the current calendar to a balanced calendar.** After hearing several paragraphs of context outlining what a balanced calendar would entail, a 55% majority of respondents indicate that they prefer the current calendar while 32% are open to the balanced calendar. The intensity of responses also supports the current setup: 44% of respondents *strongly* prefer the current calendar to just 18% who strongly prefer the balanced calendar.
- ❖ **Parents are more open to a balanced calendar than students.** Parents and guardians are somewhat more open to implementing a balanced calendar (38% prefer balanced, 49% prefer the current calendar). District teachers and staff are also fairly mixed (35% balanced, 51% current). Students are far and away the most opposed to changing the calendar, with over 70% supporting the existing calendar compared to 15% for a balanced calendar.



¹ North Thurston Public Schools circulated an online survey in March 2022. This analysis was prepared by Strategies 360 using the survey dataset. No margin of error can be calculated.

- ❖ **Among those who are open to a balanced calendar, lessening stress and boosting support for students and staff are compelling points.** Among a list of reasons to support a balanced calendar, the largest proportion of survey respondents emphasize giving students more time to relax throughout the year (selected as a top benefit by 32%), allowing students to access support at more times throughout the year (30%), and giving staff time to refresh throughout the year (27%). District teachers and staff are particularly drawn to that last point, with 55% of them citing it as a top benefit of a balanced calendar.

Top Five Benefits of a Balanced Calendar	Total	Parents	Staff	Students
Students can have more time to relax throughout the year	32%	33%	30%	36%
Students can access support at more times throughout the year	30%	31%	39%	21%
Staff can have more time to refresh throughout the year	27%	26%	55%	12%
Students can participate in enrichment activities during the year	22%	25%	19%	18%
Families would need less summer childcare	18%	21%	13%	14%

- ❖ **Concerns about the balanced calendar are primarily about logistics.** The community's greatest concerns about a balanced calendar are managing work, childcare, and household logistics (56%), that the balanced calendar wouldn't align with other school district schedules (45%), and that too much change has already taken place in schooling (35%). Staff are particularly worried about the lack of alignment with other districts, while this is less of a concern for parents. More than 40% of students also note the impact on employment options during the shorter summer as a concern.

Top Five Concerns about a Balanced Calendar	Total	Parents	Staff	Students
Work schedules, childcare, and other household logistics	56%	55%	57%	56%
Not being aligned to other school district schedules	45%	41%	60%	44%
There is already too much change in schooling	35%	29%	34%	54%
No additional funding for a balanced calendar	29%	29%	39%	21%
Student or staff employment options during a shorter summer	29%	23%	32%	41%