

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

With the Labor Day weekend in the rear-view window, there's no escaping that the school year is in full swing.



There was a time when the Labor Day and Memorial Day weekends were the bookends to the school year: School started the Tuesday after Labor Day and ended just ahead of the Memorial Day weekend.

Today's modern school calendar came from standardization efforts in the late 19th century. According to PBS.org, the most logical time for a long break was the summer months, when it was often sweltering hot in school buildings that lacked air conditioning.

But with time and educational changes, students are being required to be in school for a longer period of time, with many schools starting the year in August and continuing into June.

Kindergarten through six-grade students must have 910 classroom hours; seventh-through 12th-graders must have 1,001 hours.

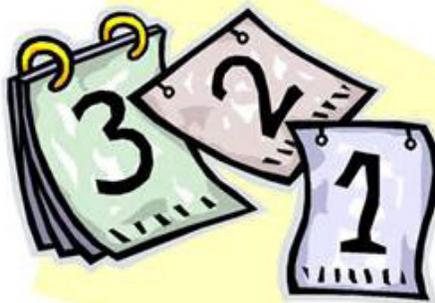
Some states, such as Michigan, have a law that mandates that schools must start after Labor Day unless a school receives a waiver to start earlier.

Tourism dollars are behind Michigan leaders' reasoning. An extra week or 10 days of summer vacation means more money for the state.

Last month, State Sen. Gayle Manning, R-North Ridgeville, introduced a bill to start school in Ohio after Labor Day, citing concerns parents have with busy summer sports schedules conflicting with family vacation time, an article in the Cincinnati *Enquirer* reported.

I agree with the sentiment behind Manning's effort but again, because of changes in education requirements, there are other issues to consider when planning the school year.

There's no way around the fact that the school year has become longer as tests and testing



Sept. 9, 2016

schedules have been legislated.

And because most schools now have air conditioning, starting the year in August can be done in some comfort.

By starting in August, which helps with testing dates, schools can complete the year close to Memorial Day weekend, which also seems to be important to parents.

It's a difficult needle to thread, creating a school calendar that makes everyone happy. But keeping students' needs at the forefront of the decision-making process must always be the priority.

Ty Ankrom is the superintendent of the Pickaway County Educational Service Center. He can be reached at ty.ankrom@pickawayesc.org.