

Here's what I think ...

By Ty Ankrom

Jan. 9, 2015



In the world of K-12 education, the calendar revolves around the school year. Generally, for teachers and students, the year starts in August and ends in May or June.

Teachers earn their summer vacation by working very hard during the school year. In addition to the expected teaching, there is preparation and follow-up. As I wrote last month, teachers spend time grading papers, meeting with parents, meeting with students, fulfilling administrative work and serving as coaches and advisors for extracurricular activities.

A recent blog on EdWeek by Nancy Flanagan (http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teacher_in_a_strange_land/) addresses the hardship that can come for teachers and students when parents don't respect the school year and take family vacations during class time.

While this certainly isn't a black-and-white issue, the idea that the school calendar is flexible may give students the idea that what is being taught at school can be missed.

Flanagan writes, "It's our collective belief that our own assignments, grades and delivery of content represent real, important learning, making a week off from school feel dangerous. It's our expectation that one hard-working teacher can genuinely monitor 30 (or 150) students and juggle their mastery of a panel of required skills and concepts, using almighty data."

So while it may be easy for a student to miss school, it's not always easy for a student to make up the time lost.

Teachers spend a lot of time preparing for their classes. For a family to expect that a student will make up the time with the teacher after the vacation is unfair to the teacher and to the students who were in class.

Parents should work around the school calendar. There are times during the year (summer, Thanksgiving, winter break, spring break and long weekends) that should allow plenty of opportunities for time away.

The school year is static; parents know students are expected in school from August to June. To plan a family vacation that conflicts with that schedule is a disservice to the students and the teachers.

Ankrom is the superintendent of the Pickaway County Educational Service Center.

