

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

UNIFORM SCHOOL START DATE

THE ISSUE

Currently Indiana law sets a 180 instructional-day minimum for K-12 school calendars but lets districts choose when to begin their school year. Some schools have started as early as July, leading to renewed debates over whether too-early start dates deprive students of valuable summer work and extracurricular experiences. While a recent bill (H.B. 1363) calling for a uniform post-Labor Day start date did not make it out of committee, recent survey research suggests that a majority of Hoosiers favor a uniform start date in late August.

KEY FINDINGS

Public Opinion Strategies conducted a phone survey of **500 likely voters in Indiana** from **February 2-4, 2016**, producing results with a margin of error of $\pm 4.38\%$. Key findings include:

- **63% of respondents were in favor of creating a uniform school start date for all Indiana public schools.** Each region of the state (Central, East, Northwest, and South) favored this proposal by at least **61%**. This includes **60% of those with children in their households.**
- **At least 63% of Hoosiers from each region are in favor of starting the school year no earlier than the 4th week in August.**
- **41% felt the best way to improve public education in Indiana was to increase job-training and internship opportunities or create education partnerships with local colleges and businesses.**

CONCLUSION

Survey data suggest that Hoosiers favor creating a uniform school start date that would begin in late August, and prioritize students receiving more job training/internship hours and more opportunities for college credits. Passing uniform start date legislation would serve these interests and benefit Hoosier children and families.

LOCAL CONTROL?

In 2015-2016, over half of the schools in Indiana already began school after August 15. Those who oppose making such a date uniform often cite the need to retain local control over school calendars. Yet local control for its own sake – as opposed to an earlier start date warranted by specific local conditions – should not outweigh the benefits to students from summer employment and extracurricular activities.

65% of survey respondents are less than fully satisfied, or unsatisfied, by their local school district's academic calendar