

# 2017 Yukon School Calendar Public Engagement Survey Report

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This report was prepared by Rachel Westfall, Senior Statistician, Yukon Bureau of Statistics for the Department of Education, Government of Yukon. For more information, please contact [ybsinfo@gov.yk.ca](mailto:ybsinfo@gov.yk.ca).

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## Introduction

The Government of Yukon conducted a public engagement survey on school calendar dates. The survey was hosted online in English and French by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and was shared on Yukon government's public engagement webpage. The survey was open to public participation between August 22 and October 16, 2017.

The guiding principle for setting school calendars is to meet the educational needs of Yukon students. The Department of Education will be considering current research as well as responses to this opinion survey and feedback from School Councils and school communities when setting school calendar dates for the next four school years. The goal is to establish a school calendar that promotes regular attendance, reduces student absences and optimizes learning for the greatest number of students to give Yukon learners the best chance at success.

The Department of Education advertised the survey by means of local radio, newspaper and social media (Facebook) ads. The Department also sent notices and reminders to school administrators and school councils which were shared in newsletters, posted in schools, and in some cases schools provided hard copies of the questionnaire for students to take home. In addition, the Department of Education website hosted an announcement about the survey.

## Survey response

There were 1690 responses to the survey. Raw data were checked for potential response abuse and duplication of responses; no concerns were identified in the data.

The majority of respondents (76%) said they were parents or guardians of students who attend Yukon public schools. Other respondents were students (3%), school staff members (21%), and/or other community members (2%). Eighty-six percent of respondents lived in the Whitehorse area.

## A. School start and end dates and semester changes

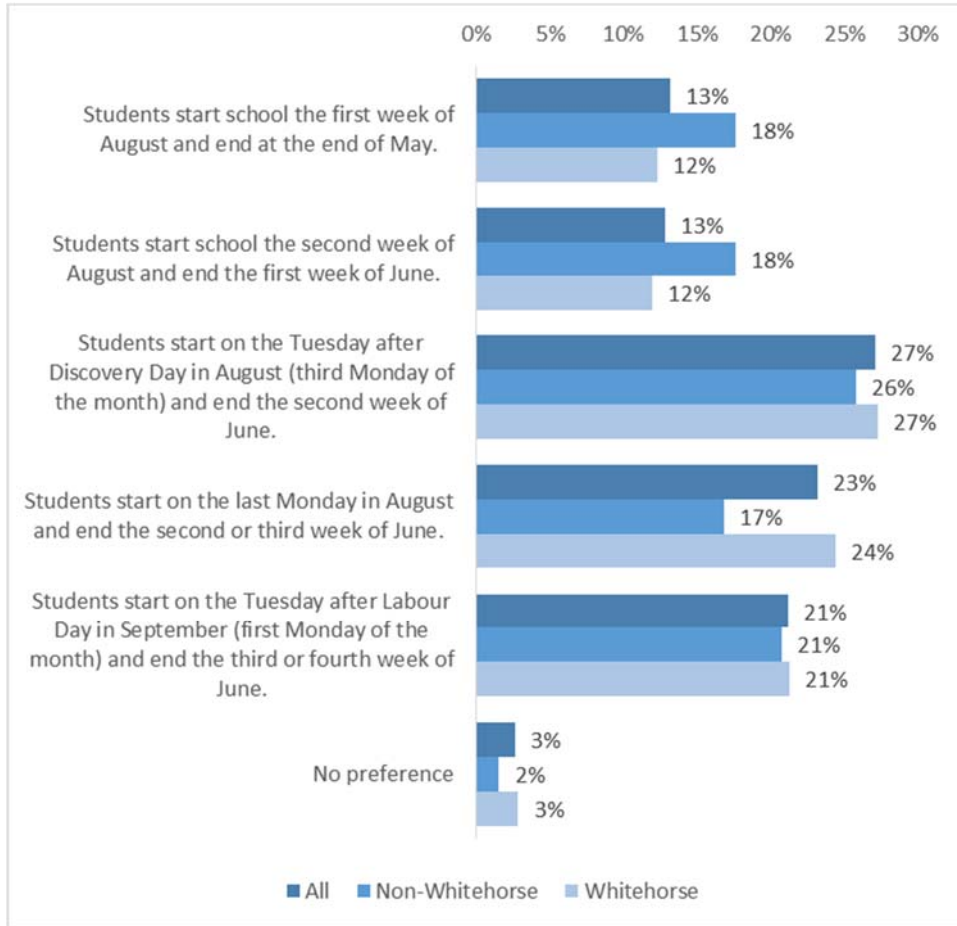
The Education Act and the collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers' Association requires schools to have 950 hours of instruction each school year, rather than a specific number of days. The school year is between 173 and 190 days, depending on how long each school day is.

This means that if the school year begins in early August, it will finish late in May or early June. If school starts in September, it will end later in June.

School start dates also impact the semester change for high school students. If schools start at the beginning of August, the semester change can be at the Christmas break. If schools start at the end of August or the beginning of September, the semester change will take place at the end of January.

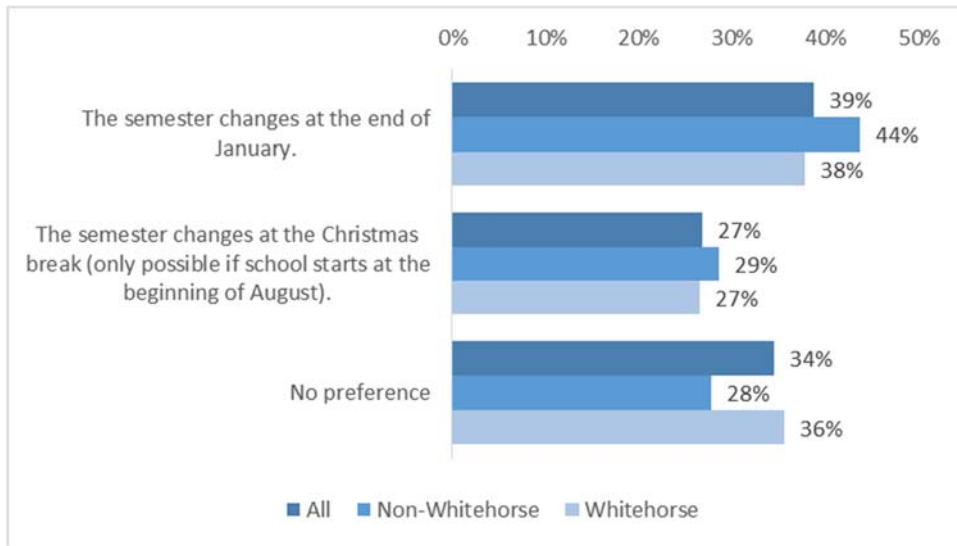
Regarding school start and end dates, respondents were asked to choose from a set of alternative options. While there was no clear preferred option, later start dates were more popular than earlier ones overall (Figure 1).

Figure 1. School start and end dates, preferred options by percentage of respondents (n=1690).



Regarding the timing of the semester change, respondents were asked to choose from two options as shown in Figure 2. The most popular option was to leave the semester change the way it is, at the end of January (Figure 2).

Figure 2. School semester change dates, preferred options by percentage of respondents (n=1690).

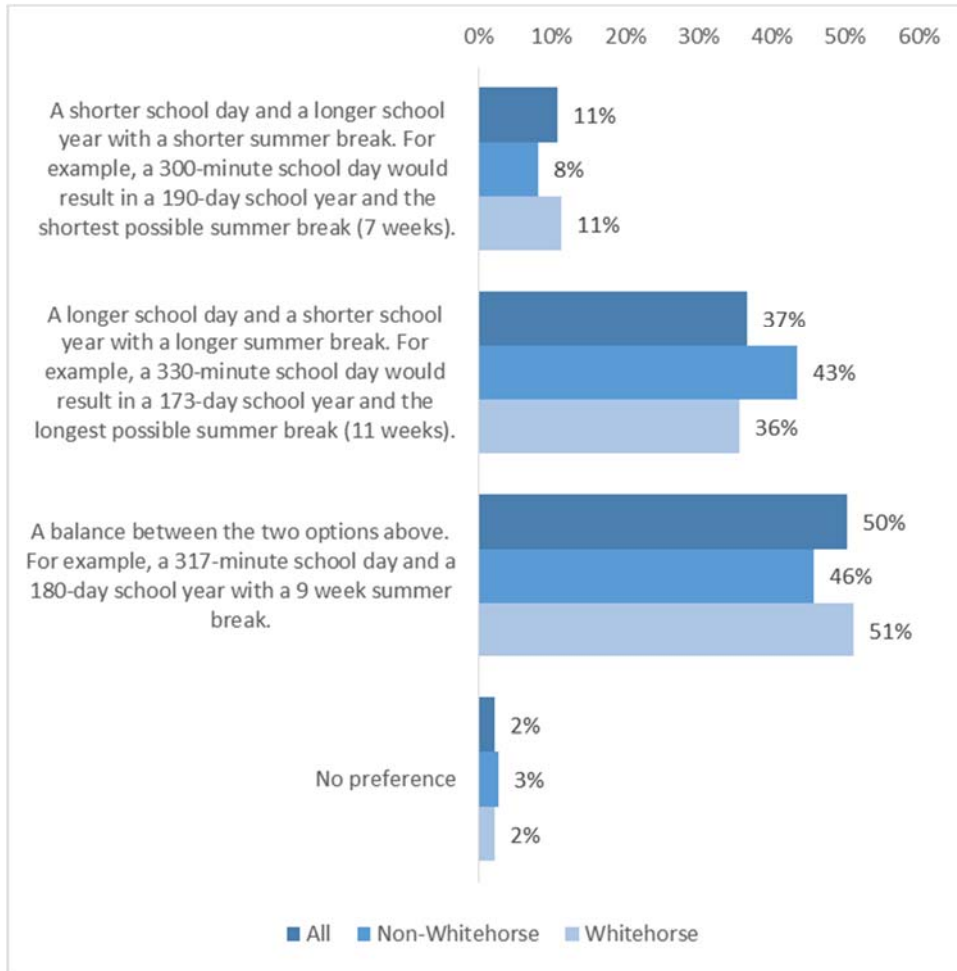


## B. Length of school days and summer break

The school year must have 950 hours of instruction and the school day must have between 300 and 330 instructional minutes. The length of the school day affects the length of the school year and the length of summer break. If the school day is shorter, the school year must be longer, with a shorter summer break. If the school day is longer, the school year must be shorter with a longer summer break.

Regarding the length of school days and summer break, respondents were asked to express their preference between three options (see Figure 3). There was very little support for a longer school year (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Length of school days and summer break, preferred options by percentage of respondents (n=1690).

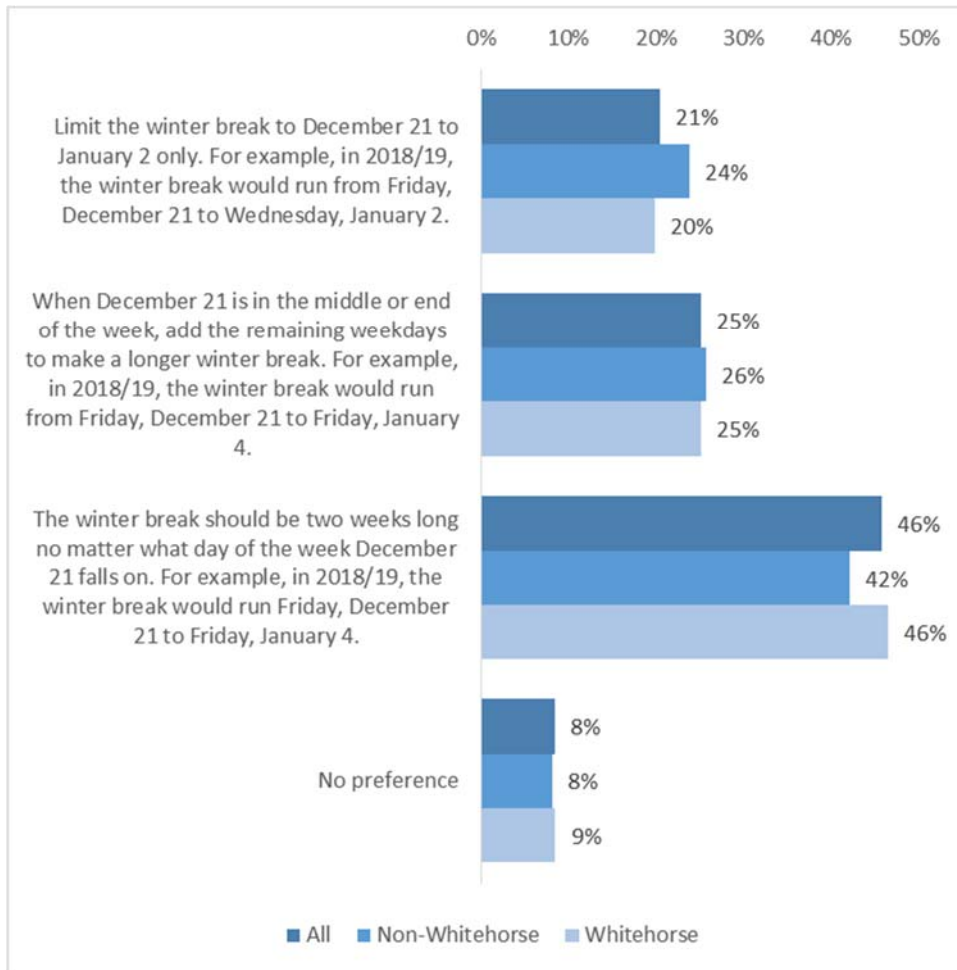


### C. Timing of winter break

The Education Act requires all Yukon schools to have a winter break that runs from at least December 21 to January 2, but it may be extended before or after those dates. Sometimes, December 21 falls in the middle of the week. This would mean that students may be in school on Monday and Tuesday and begin the winter break on Wednesday. The winter break can be made longer so that students would not have school during that week. However, this means that additional days off during the winter break would need to be made up at the beginning or the end of the school year to ensure schools can still provide the required 950 instructional hours.

Respondents were asked their preference between three options for the winter break. The most preferred option was to maintain a two-week long winter break (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Timing of winter break, preferred options by percentage of respondents (n=1690).



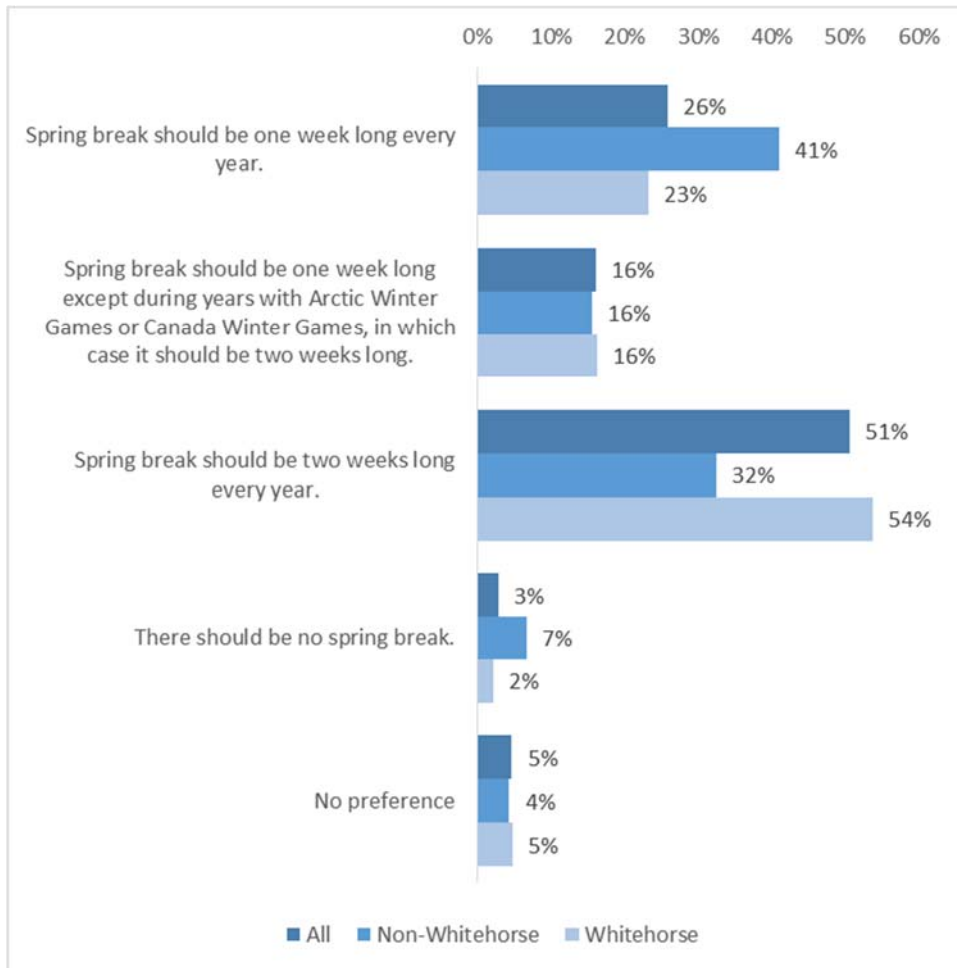
#### D. Length of spring break

Since 2007, spring break has been two weeks long in most Yukon schools. Prior to 2007, spring break was one week long, except during years with Arctic Winter Games or Canada Winter Games. Some families take holidays or travel to the games during this time. Others find it challenging to find childcare. The length of spring break affects the length of the school year, as schools must provide 950 hours of instruction. If spring break is one week, the school year will end earlier. If spring break is two weeks, the school year will end one week later.

Respondents were asked to indicate their preference between four options for spring break.

Respondents who lived in Whitehorse were most likely to prefer a two-week long spring break, while respondents in other parts of Yukon were more likely to prefer a one week long spring break (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Length of spring break, preferred options by percentage of respondents (n=1690).



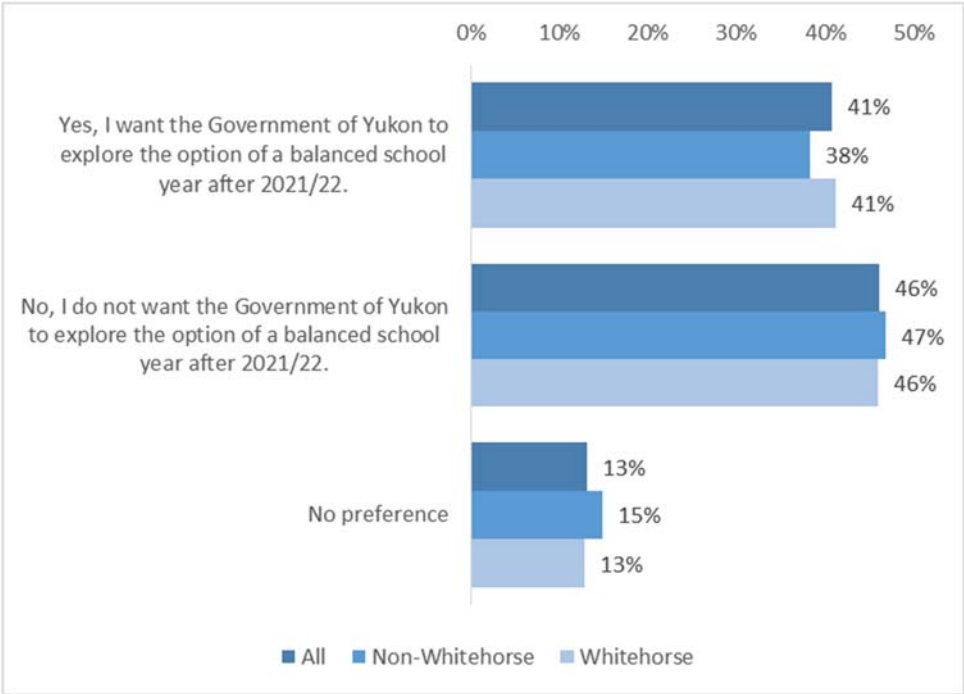
### E. Exploring a balanced school year (year-round schooling)

Balancing the school year is another way to adjust the school calendar. It involves changing the structure of the school year by redistributing instructional days throughout the year to establish a year-round school calendar. For example, this could include rotating 45 days of instruction and 15 days of vacation on and off over the course of the year, or other combinations such as 60-20 or 90-30. For school calendars after 2021/22, we want to know if you are interested in the government exploring a balanced school year.

Respondents were asked if they wanted the Government of Yukon to explore the option of a balanced year after 2021/22 school year. Respondents were slightly more likely to reject the idea of a balanced school year than to support it (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Balanced school year, preferred options by percentage of respondents (n=1690).



## Appendix A. Frequency tables

### 1. School start and end dates, preferred options by percentage of respondents

Preferred response option	Frequency	Percent
Students start school the first week of August and end at the end of May.	222	13.14
Students start school the second week of August and end the first week of June.	216	12.78
Students start on the Tuesday after Discovery Day in August (third Monday of the month) and end the second week of June.	457	27.04
Students start on the last Monday in August and end the second or third week of June.	392	23.2
Students start on the Tuesday after Labour Day in September (first Monday of the month) and end the third or fourth week of June.	358	21.18
No preference	45	2.66

### 2. School semester change dates, preferred options by percentage of respondents

Preferred response option	Frequency	Percent
The semester changes at the end of January.	654	38.7
The semester changes at the Christmas break (only possible if school starts at the beginning of August).	454	26.86
No preference	582	34.44

### 3. Length of school days and summer break, preferred options by percentage of respondents

Preferred response option	Frequency	Percent
A shorter school day and a longer school year with a shorter summer break. For example, a 300-minute school day would result in a 190-day school year and the shortest possible summer break (7 weeks).	183	10.83
A longer school day and a shorter school year with a longer summer break. For example, a 330-minute school day would result in a 173-day school year and the longest possible summer break (11 weeks).	620	36.69
A balance between the two options above. For example, a 317-minute school day and a 180-day school year with a 9 week summer break.	849	50.24
No preference	38	2.25

#### 4. Timing of winter break, preferred options by percentage of respondents

Preferred response option	Frequency	Percent
Limit the winter break to December 21 to January 2 only. For example, in 2018/19, the winter break would run from Friday, December 21 to Wednesday, January 2.	347	20.53
When December 21 is in the middle or end of the week, add the remaining weekdays to make a longer winter break. For example, in 2018/19, the winter break would run from Friday, December 21 to Friday, January 4.	426	25.21
The winter break should be two weeks long no matter what day of the week December 21 falls on. For example, in 2018/19, the winter break would run Friday, December 21 to Friday, January 4.	774	45.8
No preference	143	8.46

#### 5. Length of spring break, preferred options by percentage of respondents

Preferred response option	Frequency	Percent
Spring break should be one week long every year.	438	25.92
Spring break should be one week long except during years with Arctic Winter Games or Canada Winter Games, in which case it should be two weeks long.	273	16.15
Spring break should be two weeks long every year.	854	50.53
There should be no spring break.	47	2.78
No preference	78	4.62

#### 6. Balanced school year, preferred options by percentage of respondents

Preferred response option	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I want the Government of Yukon to explore the option of a balanced school year after 2021/22.	688	40.71
No, I do not want the Government of Yukon to explore the option of a balanced school year after 2021/22.	780	46.15
No preference	222	13.14

#### 7. Respondent type (Multiple responses allowed)

Preferred response option	Frequency	Percent
Parent or guardian of a student in a Yukon public school.	1283	75.92
Student in a Yukon public school.	50	2.96
Staff in a Yukon public school.	352	20.83
Member of a Yukon School Council or the Yukon Francophone School Board.	40	2.37

#### 8. Home community of respondent

Community	Frequency	Percent
Whitehorse area	1452	85.96
Dawson City	98	5.8
Watson Lake	25	1.48
Haines Junction	22	1.3
Marsh Lake	22	1.3
Teslin	15	0.89
Carmacks	10	0.59
Faro	10	0.59
Other Yukon	30	1.79
Outside Yukon/ Not stated	6	0.36

#### 9. School attended by one's children (parents only; multiple responses allowed)

School	Frequency	Percent
Whitehorse Elementary	333	19.7
F.H. Collins Secondary (includes Teen Parent Centre and Wood Street)	197	11.66
Jack Hulland Elementary	108	6.39
Porter Creek Secondary	103	6.09
Christ the King Elementary	90	5.33
École Émilie-Tremblay	86	5.09
Golden Horn Elementary	85	5.03
Vanier Catholic Secondary	84	4.97
Robert Service School (Dawson City)	77	4.56
Holy Family Elementary	75	4.44
Selkirk Elementary	65	3.85
Elijah Smith Elementary	64	3.79
Hidden Valley Elementary	46	2.72
Grey Mountain Primary	31	1.83
Académie Parhémie	28	1.66
Takhini Elementary	25	1.48
St. Elias Community (Haines Junction)	15	0.89
Other Yukon school	65	3.84

#### 10. School attended by respondent (students only)

School	Frequency	Percent
F.H. Collins Secondary (includes Teen Parent Centre and Wood Street)	11	0.65
Vanier Catholic Secondary	11	0.65
Porter Creek Secondary	10	0.59
Other Yukon school	19	1.14

## Appendix B. Survey questionnaire

### Introduction

To help families and staff plan for school, the Government of Yukon is planning school calendars four years in advance.

We work with School Councils, administrators and school communities in creating the school calendars. We would like to know what you think about the school calendar for the 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 school years.

This survey is voluntary and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your individual responses to the survey will be kept confidential, and will be combined with others for reporting purposes. The responses will help us set the key dates for the next four school years and make sure the school calendar balances the needs of our school communities.

### Background

According to the *Education Act*, each school calendar year must have:

- 950 hours of instruction;
- 15 hours of professional development days determined by the department; and
- 15 hours of non-instructional days determined by School Councils.

The Act also says:

- The school day must be between 300 and 330 instructional minutes;
- The winter break must be at least between December 21 to January 2; and
- All schools within a community must have the same school calendar (All Whitehorse schools must have the same calendar; both Watson Lake schools must have the same calendar).

The length of the school year:

The Act does not require a specific number of school days. The number of school days and minutes per day must add up to 950 instructional hours. For example, a 300-minute instructional day would result in a 190-day school year. A 330-minute instructional day would result in a 173-day school year.

For the 2017/18 school year, these requirements were met with 174 instructional days with 325 minutes in each day, for a total of 950 hours of instruction.

### School start and end dates and semester changes

The *Education Act* and the collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers' Association requires schools to have 950 hours of instruction each school year, rather than a specific number of days. The school year is between 173 and 190 days, depending on how long each day is.

This means that if the school year begins in early August, it will finish late in May or early June. If school starts in September, it will end later in June.

School start dates also impact the semester change for high school students. If school starts at the beginning of August, the semester change can be at Christmas break. If school starts at the end of August or the beginning of September, the semester change will take place at the end of January.

**\*1 (a) Which of the following options do you most prefer?**

- Students start school the first week of August and end at the end of May.
- Students start school the second week of August and end the first week of June.
- Students start on the Tuesday after Discovery Day in August (third Monday of the month) and end the second week of June.
- Students start on the last Monday in August and end the second or third week of June.
- Students start on the Tuesday after Labour Day in September (first Monday of the month) and end the third or fourth week of June.
- No preference.

**\*1 (b) Which of the following options do you most prefer?**

- The semester changes at the end of January.
- The semester changes at the Christmas break (only possible if school starts at the beginning of August).
- No preference.

**1 (c) Are there any comments you would like to make about the questions above?**

### Length of school days and summer break

The school year must have 950 hours of instruction and the school day must have between 300 and 330 instructional minutes.

The length of the school day affects the length of the school year and the length of summer break.

If the school day is shorter, the school year must be longer, with a shorter summer break. If the school day is longer, the school year must be shorter with a longer summer break.

**\*2 (a) Which of the following options do you most prefer?**

- A shorter school day and a longer school year with a shorter summer break. For example, a 300-minute school day would result in a 190-day school year and the shortest possible summer break (7 weeks).
- A longer school day and a shorter school year with a longer summer break. For example, a 330-minute school day would result in a 173-day school year and the longest possible summer break (11 weeks).
- A balance between the two options above. For example, a 317-minute school day and a 180-day school year
- with a 9 week summer break.
- No preference.

**2 (b) Are there any comments you would like to make about the question above?**

### Timing of winter break

The *Education Act* requires all Yukon schools to have a winter break that runs from at least December 21 to January 2, but it may be extended before or after those dates.

Sometimes, December 21 falls in the middle of the week. This would mean that students may be in school on Monday and Tuesday and begin the winter break on Wednesday.

The winter break can be made longer so that students would not have school during that week. However, this means that additional days off during the winter break would need to be made up at the beginning or the end of the school year to ensure schools can still provide the required 950 instructional hours.

**\*3 (a) Which of the following options do you most prefer?**

- Limit the winter break to December 21 to January 2 only. For example, in 2018/19, the winter break would run from Friday, December 21 to Wednesday, January 2.
- When December 21 is in the middle or end of the week, add the remaining weekdays to make a longer winter break. For example, in 2018/19, the winter break would run from Friday, December 21 to Friday, January 4.
- The winter break should be two weeks long no matter what day of the week December 21 falls on. For
- example, in 2018/19, the winter break would run Friday, December 21 to Friday, January 4.
- No preference.

**3 (b) Are there any comments you would like to make about the question above?**

**Spring break**

Since 2007, spring break has been two weeks long in most Yukon schools. Prior to 2007, spring break was one week long, except during years with Arctic Winter Games or Canada Winter Games. Some families take holidays or travel to the games during this time. Others find it challenging to find childcare.

The length of spring break affects the length of the school year, as schools must provide 950 hours of instruction.

If spring break is one week, the school year will end earlier. If spring break is two weeks, the school year will end one week later.

**\*4 (a) Which of the following options do you most prefer?**

- Spring break should be one week long every year.
- Spring break should be one week long except during years with Arctic Winter Games or Canada Winter Games, in which case it should be two weeks long.
- Spring break should be two weeks long every year.
- There should be no spring break.
- No preference.

**4 (b) Are there any comments you would like to make about the question above?**

## Exploring a balanced school year (year-round schooling)

Balancing the school year is another way to adjust the school calendar. It involves changing the structure of the school year by redistributing instructional days throughout the year to establish a year-round school calendar.

For example, this could include rotating 45 days of instruction and 15 days of vacation on and off over the course of the year, or other combinations such as 60-20 or 90-30.

For school calendars after 2021/22, we want to know if you are interested in the government exploring a balanced school year.

### **\* 5 (a) Would you like the Government of Yukon to explore offering a balanced school year option after 2021/22?**

- Yes, I want the Government of Yukon to explore the option of a balanced school year after 2021/22.
- No, I do not want the Government of Yukon to explore the option of a balanced school year after 2021/22.
- No preference.

### **5 (b) Are there any comments you would like to make about the question above?**

## Demographics

The following questions help us to understand the differences of opinions and preferences among groups of respondents.

### **\*Which of the following categories best describes you? You may select more than one (for instance, you may be a parent as well as a teacher).**

- Parent or guardian of a student in a Yukon public school.
- Student in a Yukon public school.
- Staff in a Yukon public school.
- Member of a Yukon School Council or the Yukon Francophone School Board.
- Other community member such as service provider, art or recreation program provider, employer, etc. Please indicate:

### **\*Which community do you live in?**

- Beaver Creek
- Burwash Landing
- Carcross
- Carmacks
- Dawson City
- Destruction Bay
- Faro
- Haines Junction
- Ibex Valley



- Marsh Lake
- Mayo
- Mount Lorne
- Old Crow
- Pelly Crossing
- Ross River
- Tagish
- Teslin
- Watson Lake
- Whitehorse
- I don't live in Yukon.
- Other:

**\*[Parents only]** Which school does your child attend? You may choose more than one school if you have

**children attending different schools.**

- Académie Parhémie
- Aurora Virtual School
- Chief Zzeh Gittlit (Old Crow)
- Christ the King Elementary
- Del Van Gorder (Faro)
- Elijah Smith Elementary
- Eliza Van Bibber (Pelly Crossing)
- École Émilie-Tremblay
- F.H. Collins Secondary (includes Teen Parent Centre and Wood Street)
- Ghùch Tlâ Community School (Carcross)
- Golden Horn Elementary
- Grey Mountain Primary
- Hidden Valley Elementary
- Holy Family Elementary
- ILC- Individual Learning Centre
- J.V. Clark (Mayo)
- Jack Hulland Elementary
- Johnson Elementary (Watson Lake)
- Kluane Lake (Destruction Bay)
- Nelnah Bessie John (Beaver Creek)
- Porter Creek Secondary
- Robert Service School (Dawson City)
- Ross River School
- Selkirk Elementary
- St. Elias Community (Haines Junction)
- Takhini Elementary
- Tantalus (Carmacks)
- Teslin School
- Vanier Catholic Secondary
- Watson Lake Secondary

- Whitehorse Elementary

**\*[Students only] Which school do you attend?**

- Académie Parhémie
- Aurora Virtual School
- Chief Zzeh Gittlit (Old Crow)
- Christ the King Elementary
- Del Van Gorder (Faro)
- Elijah Smith Elementary
- Eliza Van Bibber (Pelly Crossing)
- École Émilie-Tremblay
- F.H. Collins Secondary (includes Teen Parent Centre and Wood Street)
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- Selkirk Elementary
- St. Elias Community (Haines Junction)
- Takhini Elementary
- Tantalus (Carmacks)
- Teslin School
- Vanier Catholic Secondary
- Watson Lake Secondary
- Whitehorse Elementary

**Thank you for taking the survey.**