**Do You Think a Longer School Calendar Is a Good Idea?**

*By* [*Michael Gonchar*](http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/author/michael-gonchar/)

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Ten public school districts around the country are lengthening the school day and year in an effort to improve student academic performance. This effort follows the lead of many charter schools, which have adopted longer school calendars. Do you think adding time to the school year is a good idea

In [“School Districts in 5 States Will Lengthen Their Calendars,”](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/03/education/school-districts-in-5-states-will-lengthen-their-calendars.html) Motoko Rich reports on the story:

The school day and year are about to get longer in 10 school districts in five states, where schools will add up to 300 hours to their calendars starting next fall.

In an effort to help underperforming students catch up on standardized tests and give them more opportunities for enrichment activities, 35 schools that enroll about 17,500 students will expand the school day and year in the 2013-14 academic year. Forty more schools that enroll about 20,000 students will also extend classroom and after-school time in the next three years.

… Already, more than 1,000 public schools across the country, including numerous charter schools, have added more time to the school day and year. A growing group of education advocates is pushing for schools to keep students on campus longer, arguing that low-income children in particular need more time to catch up as schools face increasing pressure to improve student test scores. Advocates also say that poor students tend to have less structured time outside school, without the privilege of classes and extracurricular activities that middle-class and affluent children frequently enjoy.

Research on the benefits of adding time to the school day has so far been mixed. Detractors in teachers’ unions, who say they need fair compensation for working more, have said that more hours and days in the classroom is not enough.

In a statement, Luis Ubiñas, the president of the Ford Foundation, said the initiative was not “about adding time and doing more of the same. It’s about creating a learning day that suits the needs of our children, the realities of working parents and the commitment of our teachers. It’s a total school makeover.”

**Students:** Tell us …

* Do you think adding time to the school year is a good idea?
* What do you think are the benefits of adding hours to the school calendar? Do you think it will lead to better academic performance for some students?
* What do you think are the downsides of adding time to the school calendar?
* The article states, “Research on the benefits of adding time to the school day has so far been mixed.” Why do you think the evidence might be mixed?
* Luis Ubiñas, the president of the Ford Foundation, says the initiative is not “about adding time and doing more of the same.” Instead, he advocates “a total school makeover.” What do you think a total school makeover might look like?