

WEATHER-RELATED

We generally become more frustrated with those things that we can control the least. Take the weather as a prime example of this. Dealing with weather-related issues and their possible effect on the normal operations of the school day became quite a headache for many schools and parents during August and early September. The reason for this is due to many older school buildings lacking air conditioning. If the outside temperature is in the mid-90's or higher, it is going to be that hot in a classroom full of bodies, as well. At times, even the temperature on the school buses can be just as oppressive. At that point, one has to question the amount or quality of the learning that is taking place when the environment is so uncomfortable. It's hard on the students. It's hard on the staff. And, it's hard on the parents who may have to work around the early dismissals or closings.

But, it's the weather. We can't control it no matter how much we might like to do so. All we can do is try to deal with it. Fortunately, the heat has finally broken (at least to some degree), and our school days are back to something resembling "normal." And, it's a good thing. You see, the dates for State Achievement Tests are set in stone. Regardless of the problems incurred by individual school districts, those tests will be administered on dates previously established. And, so, the Third Grade Reading Achievement Test will be given in October, just as it is each year. We went through this same problem last February. The only difference was that the weather culprit was ice and snow. Unlike the heat wave of this summer, districts all across the state were affected by the ice and snow

of February 2007. However, the State Testing Dates did not change, nor were school districts granted additional calamity days.

Now comes along a bill that, if approved, would delay the start of the school year until after Labor Day. The purpose of this bill, as I understand it, is not to guard against a late August heat wave with students and staff still using old buildings that lack air conditioning. The purpose is to promote business, specifically tourism for 2-3 more weeks in August and early September. That's all well and good, but Ohio law mandates 178 days as a minimum for instruction in our schools. Delaying the start of the school year until after Labor Day will either cause breaks during the school year (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break) to be much shorter or push the end of the school year back to mid-June, which would include the Memorial Day Weekend. We, in southern Ohio, have been known to have some pretty hot weather in June, too. Plus, what about the aspect of tourism associated with Memorial Day Weekend?

Thank goodness, students sitting daily in oppressive classrooms in our school district will be a thing of the past. In two years, we should be occupying our new elementary schools. And, if our plans hold together, the climate in those buildings will be controlled through geothermal heating and cooling. I can't wait for our students and staffs to be in those new facilities! During the heat wave of 2007, I have heard it said, and I have also made the comment that "we never went home early from school because of the hot weather when I was a student." I'll bet you know what I am referring to with this comment. No, we never were dismissed early for the heat when I was a student. To be sure, we had hot

weather back in those days. However, I also think that the heat wave of 2007 topped the hot days I endured in a classroom as both a student and a teacher. Yes, the break from the heat wave of 2007 was a welcomed relief! Thank you.

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