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## No summer break just yet for year-round schools

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KENTWOOD, Mich. (WZZM) - The end is near. The end of the school year that is.

It's an exciting time for students, parents, and teachers. Most schools in West Michigan will wrap up classes this week. But, not all schools will finish up so soon.

More and more schools in West Michigan are turning to a year round or balanced calendar. That means students will still go to school a few more weeks because they get a shorter summer break and more breaks during the year.

Ridge Park Charter Academy in Kentwood just changed to a balanced calendar this school year and is already seeing results.

So, at Ridge Park it's business as usual because school doesn't end for a few weeks yet.

Principal David King wanted to change to a balanced schedule this year for academic reasons. He explains, "Several years ago we really noticed a decline in the fall of student scores. It seems like during the summer they lost a lot of what they learned. They would leave us in June, come back to us in September and we would spend a month and a half to get them back to where they were."

Now, Ridge Park students get just six weeks off during the summer. But they get two one-week breaks during the year and a little more time off at all of the typical holiday breaks.

After just one year, students see the effects of the new calendar. Sixth grader Morgan Clarke says, "I like it because it's sort of long to be at home with just nothing to do for a whole summer. And I usually do forget and I think it's better to keep the stuff in my head instead of forgetting it."

The change also shows in test scores. King says, "I would say probably three or four months of additional growth that we've achieved this year because we've shifted the calendar."

King says the traditional school calendar just doesn't fit anymore. He explains, "In the 1700's the kids were needed to be helpful on the farm because we were an agrarian culture. And I don't have any kids who work on a farm in my school."

But, the kids are working hard at school, thanks to some well timed breaks. Sixth grader Ailine Flores says, "It rests our brain from all that hard work that they give us."

During the extra breaks in the school year, Ridge Park offers optional extra help to make sure students keep up. Administrators have noticed applications are up quite a bit



for next school year and they think some of that is because of the balanced schedule.

A number of schools in West Michigan have an extended calendar of some sort, including several in the Grand Rapids district.

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