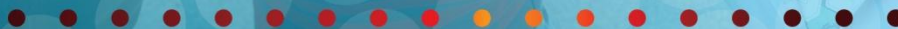





pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CREATING ALIGNED CALENDARS: *A Guide for Career and Technical Centers and Sending Districts*





June, 2013

Dear Colleagues:

Throughout Pennsylvania, Career and Technology Centers (CTC) successfully educate students so that they are both college and career ready. This effort is underscored by the goals of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Technical Assistance Program which focuses on improving student achievement in technical skills, reading and math.

To provide career and technical education (CTE) students with in-depth and rich learning experiences that develop their technical and academic skills, it is critical to maximize time on task in the CTE classroom. When CTCs and sending school districts align their school calendars and schedules, it establishes a strong foundation to help achieve this goal. This guide on calendar alignment shares useful tips and insights from CTC directors on how to collaborate with sending districts to develop coordinated calendars.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to provide CTE students with a robust education that prepares them for postsecondary success.

Sincerely,

Lee Burket, Ed.D.

Director, Bureau of Career and Technical Education
Pennsylvania Department of Education

Introduction

In 2013, under the direction of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Bureau of Career and Technical Education, Meeder Consulting set out to identify and document key practices used by career and technology center (CTC) administrators to align their academic year calendars with those of their sending districts.

The purpose of this guide is to provide CTC directors and district superintendents with information and specific examples about how CTCs and their sending districts throughout Pennsylvania are working towards calendar alignment. The guide describes three different approaches to developing aligned calendars and identifies key factors to be considered during the alignment process. Although the primary audience is CTC directors, calendar alignment requires a coordinated effort among primary stakeholders from both the CTC and the sending district. The important role that district superintendents play in moving calendar alignment forward cannot be understated. With that collaborative approach in mind, this guide is intended to be a useful resource for both CTC directors and their sending district superintendent colleagues.

Two methods were used to gather information on how to address calendar alignment. First, the results of a survey administered by PDE to all CTC directors seeking their input on the issue were reviewed. The survey results were analyzed to identify key practices, stakeholders and challenges related to developing aligned calendars. A summary of the survey results can be found in the Appendix of this guide.

Second, two follow-up group interviews were conducted with several directors whose survey responses indicated that they have developed aligned calendars with sending districts or have made progress in doing so. The purpose of these interviews was to gather more specific information and examples about their approach to calendar alignment.

What Does Calendar Alignment Look Like?

Calendar alignment refers to the coordination of academic calendars among the CTC and sending districts. The goal is to achieve a synchronized, common academic calendar, so that, to the extent possible, all schools observe similar school year start and end dates, days off for holidays and breaks, and perhaps even the same teacher in-service days. Instructional time for students is maximized when CTCs and their sending districts align their calendars. As one director noted, although perfectly aligned calendars may not be achievable, flexible, closely aligned calendars could be a realistic goal. Another director noted that if CTCs and sending districts make scheduling an annual discussion and effort, they can create calendars that are as closely synchronized as possible.

This guidebook has three main sections. The first section details how to set the stage for successful collaboration between CTCs and their sending districts during the calendar alignment process. Section Two provides information for CTC and district leadership staff on how to navigate and guide the actual process of developing aligned calendars. The third section presents summary findings.

SECTION 1: Setting the Stage for Calendar Alignment

For CTC directors or district superintendents, efforts to address calendar alignment will be shaped by many factors, including time and resources, the number of sending schools and the political environment. Factors, such as the strength of the working relationship between CTCs and sending districts and the extent to which both sides value calendar alignment, should be addressed before any working efforts to develop aligned academic calendars take place.

Addressing these factors early on can help create an environment conducive to addressing calendar alignment. CTC directors and sending district superintendents can influence some of these factors more so than others. By taking the time to step back and focus on those factors which can be influenced, the stage can be set for successful calendar alignment.

1.1 Strengthen Working Relationship between CTCs and Sending Districts

According to CTC directors, one of the most critical “must haves” to successfully developing aligned academic calendars with sending districts is a strong working relationship with key district stakeholders. Making the effort to strengthen ties with sending districts’ administrators builds a solid foundation for collaboration and compromise. Without this foundation, efforts to secure support for calendar alignment and to actually do the hard work of alignment most likely will fall short of their potential.

Helpful Hint

Although working simultaneously to collaborate on aligned calendars may require an extensive time commitment, it also provides an excellent opportunity to identify conflicts and address potential challenges efficiently and in person. Collaborating in this manner can help strengthen the relationship between the CTC and sending district administrators, perhaps paving the way for even greater collaboration down the road.

Directors who have made progress in developing aligned calendars specifically noted the following keys to guiding the alignment process: the willingness of district superintendents to communicate early and often with the CTC director about the academic calendar; a high level of cooperation between the CTC and sending districts; and a mutual understanding of what is most important for students.

Building this level of collaboration and trust takes time and a concerted effort from both the CTC leadership and the sending districts’ leadership teams. For specific suggestions on how to strengthen working relationship among CTCs and sending districts, see PDE’s publication *Career and Technical Education Leadership Connections: A Guide to Effective Working Relationships*.

1.2 Make the Case for Alignment

Key stakeholders from the CTC or the sending districts may need to be convinced that aligning school calendars is an investment worth making. Below are some points to consider and suggestions on how to make the case for alignment.

Prepare Data and Talking Points about Missed Instructional Days

Collect information on and be ready to show sending district representatives exactly how many days students are missing at the CTC due to calendar misalignment. This tactic serves two purposes:

- First, such information can put the impact of misaligned calendars in relevant and concrete terms.
- Second, if the number of days is fairly low, it may highlight that there is not much work to be done to reach almost full alignment. Such data could make alignment seem like an achievable goal rather than a monumental task.

Helpful Hint

Make a chart that shows all the calendar conflict days and present this to the calendar alignment working group. This visual can help highlight the concrete effects of misaligned calendars.

One survey respondent stated that the CTC measures attendance on conflicting calendar days and provides this data to the joint operating committee and district superintendents. They then work with each district to develop an action plan to increase attendance on conflict days. The result is that attendance on conflict days is increasing annually.

Frame the Discussion around What is Best for Students

Emphasize the impact of alignment on student learning and the importance of students attending the CTC as many hours as possible in order to fulfill their program requirements. Gerald Witmer, director of Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center, embeds the discussion about calendar alignment as part of a greater focus on comprehensive and strategic school improvement. He frames the discussion around how to help improve student learning outcomes. As Lois Richards, director of Clearfield County CTC, points out, making one's audience "understand what's best for kids" is a powerful motivator.

Demonstrate the Effect of Misaligned Calendars on the Sending Schools' Schedule

Raise the question of how sending schools will accommodate CTC students on those days the CTC is closed but the sending school is open. The challenge of reworking their schedules on such days may spur sending districts to want better aligned calendars.

Emphasize the Ability to Control this Issue

Scheduling issues is one variable related to student learning that can be addressed directly and which school leaders have the power to change. This perspective could encourage parties to maximize that opportunity.

SECTION 2: Guiding the Alignment Process

2.1 Three Approaches to Calendar Alignment

After the collaboration with sending districts has been strengthened and there is support for calendar alignment, the focus can turn to the actual “ins and outs” of the alignment process. There are several important elements to consider and address. When these elements are addressed upfront and agreed-upon policies and practices to guide the alignment process are established, the path is set for continued collaboration in future years. As one director noted, once alignment occurs with sending districts, it should be relatively easy to maintain.

Helpful Hint

If the CTC takes the lead in developing a draft school calendar that the sending districts can use as a guide, some of the burden for the districts may be eased and they may be more inclined to try to align their calendars.

Determine How Best to Approach Calendar Alignment

CTC directors and sending district representatives will need to consider early on how to collaborate throughout the alignment process. In short, this means determining an agreed-upon approach to developing aligned calendars and deciding:

- Whether one party will assume primary responsibility for guiding the alignment process;
- If one party will take the lead in drafting a calendar which will be used as a guide for the other party; and
- How much input each party will provide on the others’ calendars.

This guide describes a collaborative approach that can be adapted to most contexts. Variations of this approach are used by CTC directors who have had success in aligning CTC calendars with those of their sending districts.

Directors agree that the best approach to calendar alignment is a collaborative process in which the CTC director and the representatives from the sending districts work together to develop an aligned calendar. Typically this process includes at least one in-person meeting to share and compare draft calendars as well as several follow-up conversations, which may or may not be conducted in person, to work out final details about the calendars.

There are three general approaches to facilitate this collaborative process: (1) align with the CTC’s academic calendar; (2) align with the sending district calendars; or (3) a hybrid of the first two approaches. Each approach requires the CTC and sending districts to remain open minded and accommodating of each other’s priorities.

Approach 1: Align with the CTC’s Academic Calendar

In this approach, the CTC first develops its academic calendar and sending districts use this as a guide to create theirs.

Clearfield County CTC director Lois Richards starts the calendar alignment process with sending districts at the January Professional Advisory Committee

Helpful Hint

Making calendar alignment an agenda topic during face-to-face meetings with sending districts’ personnel keeps the issue at the forefront. Further, by discussing calendars in person, colleagues can quickly talk through scheduling conflicts.

meeting. (A Professional Advisory Committee is an advisory group of superintendents from participating sending districts. Led by the superintendent of record or the Career and Technical Education director, this consortium advises the joint operating committee and the CTC's administration on the educational programs and policies of the school). At that meeting, she shares the CTC calendar with Professional Advisory Committee members from the six sending districts so that they may use it as a guide to develop theirs. During the next Professional Advisory Committee meeting, the group compares the sending districts' calendars to Clearfield County CTC's calendar and makes changes as necessary.

Approach 2: Align with the Sending Districts' Academic Calendars

The sending districts take the lead in developing their academic calendars. The CTC then develops its calendar, making an effort to synchronize its calendar with the sending districts' calendars to the greatest extent possible.

At Fulton County Area Vocational Technical School, the calendar alignment process starts in full swing by the end of January or beginning of February for the following school year. The sending districts' superintendents each develop their school calendars and share their finalized calendars with Fulton County Area Vocational Technical School by March. Acting Director Donald Burd then develops the school calendar based on the sending districts' calendars.

The five sending districts for Lycoming County Career and Technical Center develop their proposed calendars, which are then reviewed at a Professional Advisory Committee meeting. During this meeting, the superintendents work with CTC Director Eric Butler to prepare a draft calendar that aligns well with their proposed calendars.

Helpful Hint

If a sending district develops a calendar first and the CTC then attempts to synchronize its calendar to it, this may help to generate buy-in and support for calendar alignment from the sending districts.

The Upper Bucks County CTC director, Bernard Wagenseller, creates the CTC's calendar after the three sending districts have developed their school calendars. He notes that the sending districts work to align with each other and then he meets with them to review their aligned calendars. At this point, he and his staff then "try to dovetail in their common schedule" to align the CTC's calendar as much as possible with those presented by the sending districts. Wagenseller emphasizes that he and his staff "need to be flexible" in collaborating with the sending districts.

Approach 3: Align Through a Hybrid Approach

Representatives from the CTC and the sending districts sit down together to develop an aligned calendar. One party may still take the lead to create a calendar first, but this calendar is then reworked by all parties in person and the master calendar is also developed during this time.

The model used by Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School's director, Brian Williams, represents a hybrid of the two models described above. Williams requests that sending district superintendents bring a projected calendar for the following school year to their October monthly meeting. Together he and the superintendents review the calendars. After the meeting, the proposed calendars are given to his executive assistant who creates a master calendar for the three sending districts and the CTC.

At the next meeting, the superintendents review the master calendar, and they and Williams discuss possible changes to be made in order to better align the calendars. Based on this discussion, they each work on their respective calendars to better align them and bring their changes to the next meeting at which time a consensus is reached on the calendars.

Williams notes that the CTC presents its willingness to create the master calendar “as a service” it offers to sending districts. He and his administrative team “put effort into aligning” and “shift responsibility to the CTC.” This approach is well received by the three sending districts.

At Cumberland Perry Area Vocational Technical School, the calendar alignment process begins during the December Professional Advisory Committee meeting, which is dedicated to sharing calendar planning options with district superintendents. Administrative Director Justin Bruhn distributes a blank calendar with state and federal holidays identified (Labor Day, Thanksgiving, etc.). As a group, the Professional Advisory Committee members then proceed month by month noting their planned starting days and the days off due to contractual obligations. District superintendents also share their draft copies of their succeeding year's calendar.

After viewing each district's calendar, the director then presents the Cumberland Perry Area Vocational Technical School calendar to the joint operating committee. By following this sequence, the director is granted the flexibility to select days of attendance with the highest number of CTE students in session. The joint operating committee provides encouragement for districts to align their calendar to the majority and for superintendents to align to the Cumberland Perry Area Vocational Technical School calendar in those districts where a large percentage of their students attend.

Helpful Hint

Print out multiple copies of draft calendars to share with sending district colleagues during meetings about alignment to help facilitate discussion. Consider emailing the draft calendars ahead of time too so that colleagues have a chance to review them before the meeting.

2.2 Additional Factors to Consider

Regardless of the approach used to align the CTC's and sending districts' calendars, CTC directors noted a series of additional suggestions to help make the alignment process run smoothly.

Helpful Hint

Once a timeframe is established, send out a summary of important “due dates” and periodic reminders to key stakeholders to keep them up to date.

Start the alignment process early. Give colleagues sufficient time to draft and finalize calendars and to present the calendars to all necessary stakeholders.

Establish a Timeframe for Calendar Development

CTC directors and sending district colleagues should determine the date by which draft calendars will be developed, when they will be shared and reviewed, and when the calendars will be finalized. Several directors suggested starting the process no later than January for the following academic year.

Focus on Consistent Communication

- Determine Main Mode of Communication.

Communication about the calendar development can occur in person, via email and phone, or a combination of both. Many directors stated that calendar alignment is discussed during the monthly Professional Advisory Committee meetings.

- Continue to conduct discussions about calendar alignment as often as possible.

Open and ongoing communication is key to moving the process along efficiently and effectively, providing the opportunity for conflicts to be addressed as they arise.

Helpful Hints

- Focus first on the items/days that are most easily aligned. This buys some “easy wins” and can help build momentum and support to tackle the more challenging components of calendar alignment.
- Build on small victories. One director suggested using the strategy, “Last year we aligned with everyone’s calendar except for 10 days. This year, let’s try to make it 8 days.”
- Remain flexible and willing to compromise. To commit to developing aligned calendars, each party must be willing to cooperate fully, accommodate others’ viewpoints, and focus on the end goal.

Identify the Key Stakeholders to Include in the Process

Communicate with sending district representatives to identify all the people who should be included in the alignment discussion and relevant meetings. A large number of CTC directors indicated that working directly with the district superintendents proved critical to developing aligned calendars, and, as one director noted, is key to moving the process along.

In addition to district superintendents, CTC directors suggest including some or all of the following potential participants in the process:

- School principals;
- Guidance counselors;
- CTC and sending school instructors,;
- Intermediate unit representatives;
- Representatives from bargaining units; and
- Joint operating committee members.

This does not mean that all of the suggested participants will/should be involved in every decision or meeting. Rather, it means that it may be helpful to keep them abreast of the progress being made and that their insight will be sought when deemed appropriate.

Confirm Who will Serve as Points of Contact

To expedite communication between meetings, know whom to contact from the sending districts about questions or updates. Make sure to have all their relevant contact information. One director noted the value in having the superintendents assign a point person from each district.

Agree on Alignment Goals

Before CTC directors and sending district colleagues begin to develop aligned calendars, the end goal and what each party will consider to be an aligned calendar should be established. For example, are both parties aiming for perfect alignment or “close enough” alignment? It may be valuable to formalize this goal by putting it in writing. Determining a shared goal can help keep each party focused on and accountable for the end product.

Document the Alignment Process

To help build consistency year-to-year, a formal policy or set of procedures for developing aligned calendars can be created. This document can address the key components outlined in this section. Formally documenting the process can help ensure that calendar alignment continues to be a goal even if there is administrative turnover at the CTC or the sending districts.

Address the Challenge of School Day Start Times

In addition to challenges associated with misaligned calendars, many CTCs also need to accommodate a variety of sending school start times.

Working with the various start times of sending schools can create major scheduling conflicts for CTCs. Students who attend different sending schools can be coming to the CTC at different times. Although this may seem a minor inconvenience, when the issue is framed in a larger context, it is apparent that it can cause significant disturbances in scheduling and maximizing student learning opportunities. For example, if there are 20 minutes each day during which students are in “transition” – that is, students are arriving at different times to the CTC and actual lessons are delayed until all have arrived – over the course of 180 school days, this adds up to about 60 hours of instructional time that is essentially unstructured time.

Due to the impact on instructional time and the challenges instructors face in accounting for disruptions in start times, this issue bears consideration in conjunction with, or in addition to, the discussion of creating aligned calendars. Specific suggestions for how instructors can handle varying student arrival times are included in Section 3 of this guide.

2.3 Changes in Scheduling

Whether CTCs and sending districts are in the early stages of alignment or already have a fully aligned calendar, procedures should be established to accommodate changes to the calendar.

Plan for Unscheduled School Closures

There may be situations, such as snow days, when all or some of the sending districts close school. To prepare for such days, CTC directors and sending district colleagues should determine:

- Will the CTC close if at least one of the sending districts is closed? Some directors noted that this determination is made based upon what the majority of sending districts do.
- Are students from sending districts that have closed school expected or required to attend the CTC that day? If they are, will transportation be provided to them?

Accommodate Testing Schedules

When developing the calendar, keep in mind the dates set aside for administering assessments, such as the Keystone Exams, at the sending schools and establish procedures for working around these disruptions. For example, determine if students will attend the CTC on testing days.

2.4 Challenges to Calendar Alignment

The road to calendar alignment will not always be smooth. As directors noted, there may be multiple obstacles along the way. This section provides an overview of some of these challenges and suggested approaches for addressing them. Many of the suggested approaches reference recommendations made earlier in this guide. (For a more in-depth discussion of challenges documented in the survey, see the Appendix.)

Addressing Challenges of Calendar Alignment	
Challenge	Suggested Approach
High turnover with key district personnel makes it hard to build and sustain strong relationships and prevents consistency from year to year	Consider working with the Professional Advisory Committee to create a formal policy or guidelines for calendar development. This would provide consistency each year.
Lack of cooperation and communication between CTC and sending district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the effect of aligned calendars on student learning. • Offer to assume responsibility for creating the first draft of a proposed calendar from which sending districts can work to develop their own. • Try to find at least one ally among sending districts and ask this colleague to take the lead in appealing to the other districts.
Timing of school year start date and breaks/holidays	Several directors noted the advantage of having “extra” school days built in to their schedule. When students miss attending the CTC due to scheduling conflicts with their sending schools, the additional days help to cushion their absence.
Differences among districts’ teacher contracts and/or collective bargaining agreements may result in different scheduled workdays for teachers and different starting/ending days	Although final calendar decisions will be made by school leadership, consider seeking input from the various bargaining units on the proposed calendars as appropriate.
Teacher in-service days/Act 80 days	Try to schedule all such days for the same dates.
Large number of sending districts makes coordination difficult	Start the calendar development process as early as possible in the school year. Be realistic about goals. It may take several years before full alignment occurs with incremental progress happening each year.
Unscheduled school closures	Develop set procedures for dealing with such closures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide how many districts need to close before the CTC closes for the day. • Determine how students will get to the CTC if the sending school is closed but the CTC is open. Communicate this decision to students. • Agree to a cohesive “message” about student attendance on such days that both the CTC and sending districts emphasize. Are students expected or required to attend the CTC if the sending school is closed?

SECTION 3: Summary Findings

In documenting the insight of CTC directors and collecting information from them, three findings emerged as critical issues for addressing the challenges of developing aligned calendars. It is worth framing these findings in a larger leadership context.

Create and Sustain Strong, Ongoing Relationships with Sending District Colleagues

As discussed earlier in this guide, one of the most important steps a CTC director can take is to strengthen the working relationship with sending district colleagues. This paves the way for greater collaboration not only on the issue of calendar alignment but also on all the issues that will be encountered in trying to best meet students' needs. In theory, it is a simple concept and one that for some CTCs will be relatively easy to achieve. But for many CTC directors, building a sustainable relationship with sending district personnel will take concerted effort and time. For ideas on how to accomplish this, please review the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) publication *Career and Technical Education Leadership Connections: A Guide to Effective Working Relationships*.

Implement Instructional Strategies that Account for Calendar Disruptions and Differing Start/End Times

Many CTC directors stressed the need to address the issue of staggered arrival and dismissal times. Given the amount of potentially unstructured time during staggered student arrivals and dismissals, instructors need to have tools and techniques to use that not only "pass the time" in terms of managing student behavior but also make the most of the time in terms of student learning. Directors stated the importance of teachers using value-added activities that can both accommodate students' comings and goings and engage them in focused learning. (It should be noted that for some CTCs, even when teachers are instructing in a quality way during this time, they are sacrificing sustained planning time.)

Instructors must use sound teaching strategies to maximize student learning in spite of scheduling conflicts. Techniques such as implementing self-paced learning guides for students to complete, differentiating and pacing instruction to meet individual needs, and utilizing transitional learning activities at the beginning and end of class are some methods instructors use to maximize learning during this unstructured time. (For additional information on these strategies and others, see PDE case studies on promising practices used by CTCs. The case studies are available on PDE's website at: www.education.state.pa.us, keywords Best Practices.

Focus on Competency-Based Education

A competency-based approach to teaching and learning is critical to instructional time. When CTC leaders and instructors implement a competency-based model for educating students, an opportunity is created to facilitate ongoing student learning even when calendar disruptions occur. For example, learning guides that allow for student-driven pace of learning prove valuable when CTCs face

several days during which not all the students are on campus together. This approach shifts the focus somewhat from the number of days students are in the building together to the number of *hours* students from each district are attending the CTC. Linking these hours of attendance to the number of program hours required and needed for each program can highlight how much instructional time really is available to students. Then, by creating learning guides or similar competency-based models, instructors can maximize, and to some degree individualize, student learning in the time available.

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Appendix: Calendar Alignment Survey Analysis

1.1 Survey Overview

To gather information about the extent to which and the process by which CTCs aligned their calendars with those of their sending districts, the Pennsylvania Department of Education administered a survey to all CTC directors in spring 2012. Fifty-one administrators from the 86 CTCs completed the survey.

The survey consisted of seven questions which focused on issues such as whether or not calendars aligned, challenges to creating aligned calendars and suggestions for making calendar alignment more feasible.

Most of the survey questions were open-ended and/or two-part. Survey analysis focused on identifying common themes and recurring issues mentioned throughout the responses. These themes and issues were further explored during follow-up conference calls with several directors.

Calendar Alignment with Sending Districts

Of the 51 CTCs represented in the survey responses, approximately 45 percent indicated their calendars mostly align with the calendars of their sending districts.

Note that the survey did not define what “alignment” meant in practice and survey participants seemed to vary in how they defined it. For the purposes of this guide, CTCs were considered to have aligned calendars if responses stated they were fully aligned or if all but a few days matched up with sending districts’ calendars. Typically in these cases, respondents indicated that these few days of misalignment did not have a significant impact on instruction or learning. For example, several responses noted that their calendars were “generally,” “for the most part,” or “very closely” aligned. As presented earlier in this guide, perhaps the more important question is how a lack of alignment affects instruction and student learning and how it is addressed.

Challenges to Calendar Alignment

When asked to identify the challenges in development of a common calendar, survey participants cited a variety of issues. These challenges are outlined in the following table and some of them are discussed in more detail. It is important to note that survey participants were not asked to rank challenges according to their degree of difficulty. Therefore, just because a greater percentage of participants identified a particular challenge, it cannot be assumed that this challenge poses the greatest difficulty for each CTC, just that it is more commonly observed.

Challenges to Calendar Alignment	Percentage of Responses
Teacher Contracts and/or Collective Bargaining	24%
Lack of Scheduling Flexibility/Unwillingness to Change	22%
Timing of Breaks and Holidays	22%
Act 80/Teacher In-service Days	18%
Large Number of Sending Districts	10%
Snow Days (Unexpected Changes in Calendars)	8%
Test Administration Days at Sending Schools	4%
Note: Percentages do not total 100% because participants could note more than one challenge. Some did not indicate any challenges.	

As the table illustrates, **accommodating teacher contracts and collective bargaining agreements** prove to be one of the most common challenges CTCs face in creating aligned calendars. For example, when each sending district must accommodate differences in teacher contracts, this may impact the start and end date of the school year. One survey participant indicated, “We (sending districts and the CTC) all have different lengths of school years for the professional staff.” Also, differences in practices such as requiring clerical days after the end of a marking period for teachers to calculate student grades or in the number of contractual working days allocated for staff affect calendar alignment.

Survey participants noted that an **unwillingness to cooperate or be flexible** in scheduling on the part of the sending districts also poses a challenge to creating aligned calendars. This can be further compounded by differences in local culture and tradition. One participant stated that “Every local district wants autonomy in developing a school calendar customized to its community’s customs.” Sometimes if tradition is so rooted in how school calendars are created, it may hinder alignment. For example, there may be challenges due to whether schools begin the year before or after Labor Day or the duration and timing of spring break.

Key Stakeholders in the Calendar Alignment Process

Of the survey participants, 55 percent indicated they collaborate with sending districts’ superintendents and/or Professional Advisory Committee members when trying to develop aligned calendars. Fourteen percent stated they work with collective bargaining representatives, and 12 percent indicated they work with the intermediate unit. (Note: Survey participants could identify more than one stakeholder with whom they address calendar alignment. Furthermore, these were the three stakeholders mentioned in open-ended questions, but the survey did not directly ask participants to list all stakeholders with whom they worked on calendar alignment.)



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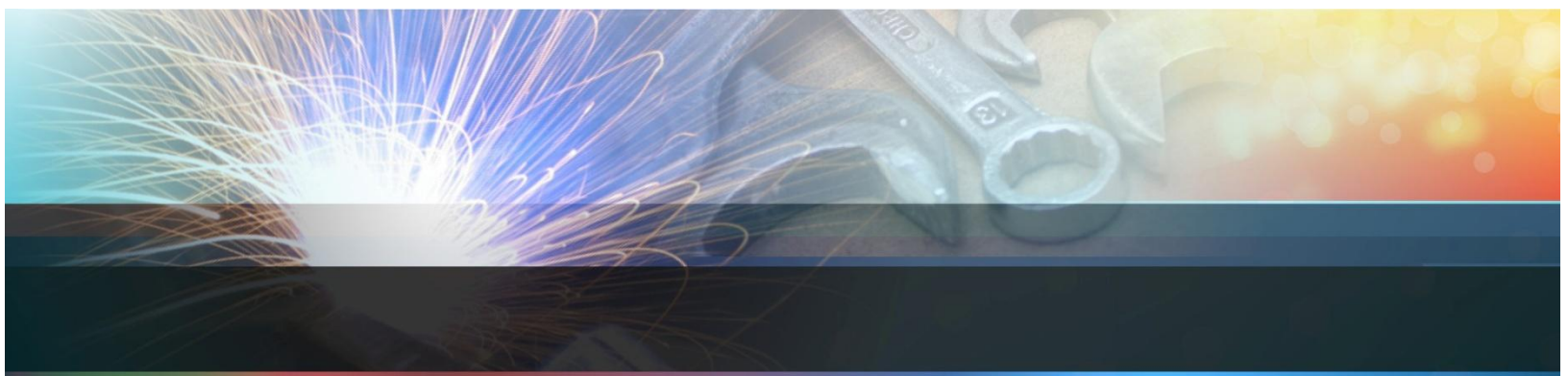
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