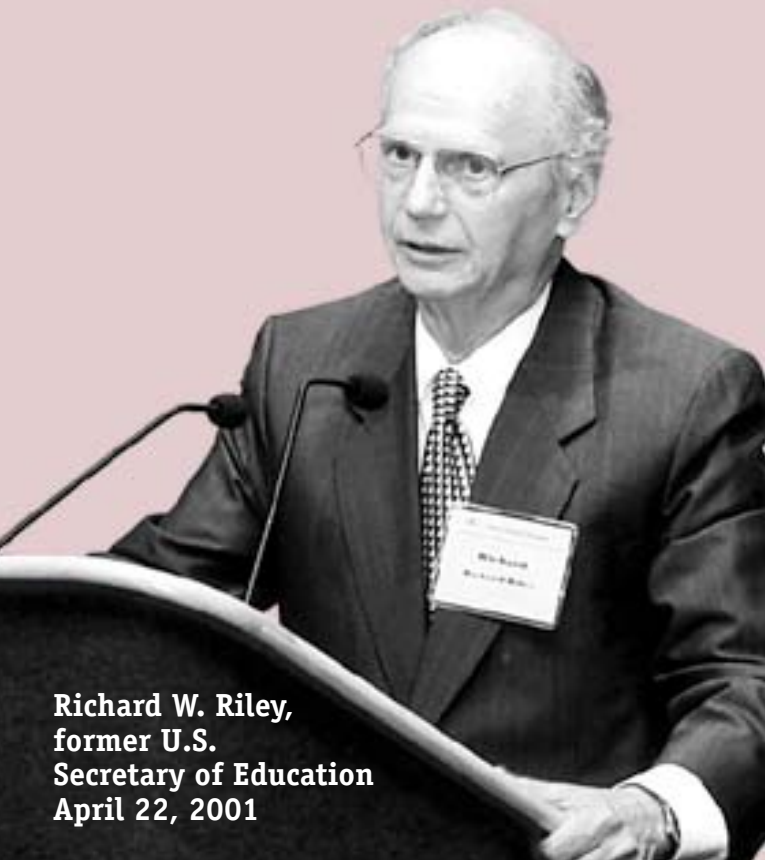


*“The continuing call for high standards and real accountability is only going to increase the pressure on school districts to think hard about keeping their schools open later and longer. Given the demand to raise standards, to give teachers more time to plan, and the need to help many more children catch up on their learning, one thing is certain—the time constraints we currently live with have got to give way to something new and different.”*



**Richard W. Riley,**  
former U.S.  
Secretary of Education  
April 22, 2001

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# Year Round Schools: New Century, New Ideas

Working group recommendations  
from a symposium held on  
April 22-23, 2001

Sponsored by the  
SIU Public Policy Institute





The mission of our Public Policy Institute is not to have almost-meaningless discussions on topics that may or may not be controversial but to tackle cutting edge issues that are significant, and make concrete recommendations. Year round schooling is one such subject, controversial to be sure, but a needed discussion. We were pleased to bring leaders from around the nation to meet and make recommendations. And my mail shows that the recommendations are controversial!

Almost everything about the schools has changed since your grandparents' day—except the school calendar. Other nations have dramatically different school years. Singapore goes to elementary and secondary school 280 days a year, Japan 243, Germany 240—and the list goes on. Why do we go on the average less than 180 days? In theory so that our children can harvest the crops. That was a different era.

#### Does year round schooling pay off?

Just crossing my desk is a report on five years of year round school in Bardston, Kentucky, a school district with above average poverty. Since the inauguration of the program, the drop-out rate lowered from 4.5% to 2.7%, grades of A's and B's grew from 56.5% to 58.2%, ACT scores went from an average of 19.1 to 19.7, and the percentage of the senior class attending college increased from 62% to 74%. Disciplinary referrals dropped 16.1%.

Most of those figures are not dramatic, but they are positive, and if you project that out to the nation it would mean significant improvement in our academic product and in the nation's standard of living.

Paul Simon  
Director, Public Policy Institute  
Southern Illinois University

## Recommendations

► **We urge Congress** to provide \$900 million a year, starting in Fiscal Year 2003, for schools that reorganize the traditional school calendar year to:

- Shift to a school calendar with no more than an eight-week summer break and redistribute the vacation time in shorter recesses between academic terms that can be used for enrichment opportunities, remediation and professional development and/or
- Lengthen their school year to include at least 200 days.

The initial grant should be \$180 per pupil for schools that have 70 percent or more of Title I student enrollment, \$120 per pupil for schools that have between 30 percent and 70 percent of Title I student enrollment and \$60 per pupil for schools that have less than 30 percent Title I enrollment.



Illinois Principals Association executive director David Turner, Harvard Professor Pat Graham and Illinois Superintendent of Schools Glen W. "Max" McGee participate in the working group session.

► **We urge legislative bodies in all states to:**

- Match the federal grants or at least provide other mechanisms of encouragement for modernizing the school calendar year.
- Work toward the creation of a full-time (11-month) professional body of teachers.

► **We urge that parents, students, businesses and community leaders** be involved early and continuously in studies and conversations about restructuring the school year. School boards, school administrators and teacher organizations should begin considering reforms in the calendar year and, where improvement is being considered, to undertake together careful planning and discussions. During the

planning process, schools should identify their program goals and develop plans for ongoing data collection and annual reports of progress in achieving those goals.

If the school year is lengthened, time should be set aside for quality professional development as well as for additional instructional days.



Purdue University Assistant Professor Julia Frazier-Gustafson (R) and Southern View Elementary School (Springfield, Ill.) Principal Michelle Seelbach (L) help shape the recommendations.

► **For the short-term**, we encourage state utility regulators to develop a separate and reduced rate structure for energy costs related to public schools during the summer months when they extend their school year and/or extend their school days. For the long-term interests of the state and nation, however, funding should be provided to increase the efficiency of school buildings to reduce energy consumption and costs. Especially in urban areas, it is important that schools be opened longer each school day with the responsibility for the "after school" time not resting primarily with teachers and school administrators. The schools should become community education centers for lifelong learning.



Former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley, Paul Simon and Illinois Deputy Governor of Education Hazel Loucks help form recommendations with the group.

► **We urge the public to understand** that an improvement in the quality of educational opportunity may require increased investment in teacher salaries and air-conditioning. We believe most Americans are willing to invest a little more in order to give their children and future generations improved educational grounding.