

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Tustin schools to open a week earlier next year

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2016-10-06 09:59:18



It's already time to be thinking about when to take a summer vacation.

That's because school will begin earlier next year for Tustin Unified students. The district sent parents and guardians an email blast this week announcing that schools from elementary on up will open Aug. 22, a week sooner than they did this year.

The last day of school on the 2017-18 calendar will be June 7, as opposed to June 16 in 2017.

"Next year's calendar actually has been on our website since June," TUSD Superintendent Gregory Franklin said. "We just wanted to make sure that we catch everyone's attention so they have lots of time to plan ahead."

Be prepared for even bigger changes in 2018-19 – when TUSD schools will start two weeks earlier than they did this year.

"We had to decide whether to rip the Band-Aid off all at once or phase the new schedule in over two years," Franklin said.

TUSD follows the lead of other districts throughout Orange County and the nation. Fullerton Joint Union High School District led the charge locally in 2013, starting the second week in August. Now more than 20 Orange County school districts start the school year in August – not after Labor Day, per time-honored tradition.

An earlier school year gives teachers and students more time to prepare for "high stakes" tests administered every spring. Statewide standardized exams, now called the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, help measure how schools are doing.

But spring is likewise the time for other important tests – especially for college-bound high school students – including SATs and Advanced Placement exams.

"Making this change will put us on equal footing with the rest of the world," Franklin said.

School officials also point out that launching the year sooner allows the first semester to close right before winter break – solving the awkward leftover week or two in January, with finals landing after a long absence.

Next school year, the first semester will be one week shorter than the second, ending at winter break even before the school completes its calendar shift.

"Teachers will plan accordingly," Franklin said.

Parents are not always thrilled to learn about mid-August start dates, Franklin conceded.

"Our hardest sell is to the parents of elementary schoolchildren," he said. "We remind them that their kids will be in high school one day."

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