



PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY

*The National Center for Teacher Education*

# POLICY BRIEF SERIES

VOLUME 8 | ISSUE 1 | 2024

PRINT ISSN: 2984-9063

ONLINE ISSN: 2984-9071

## June or August: Which school year calendar opening is more conducive to learning?

Adonis P David, Allen A Espinosa, Marie Paz E Morales, Gilbert S Arrieta, Ruel A Avilla, Alvin B Barcelona, Joseph P Erfe, Daryl Roy T Montebon, Shila Rose D Sia-Pastor, Nikolee Marie A Serafico-Reyes, Abigail A Soliman, and Jayson L de Vera



*Photo courtesy of PNU-ITL Student Government*

This policy brief outlines the findings of a two-part study regarding the ongoing discourse on the basic education school calendar in the Philippines. The first part presents findings from an online survey of public basic education teachers, revealing that 85.9% prefer a June school opening, citing climate considerations and student health as primary reasons. The second part conducts a comparative analysis of school calendars in nine ASEAN countries, highlighting diverse practices and the lack of a clear correlation between the length of the school calendar and student performance. Recommendations include a gradual transition to a preferred school calendar, consideration of shorter breaks, and the creation of a comprehensive law covering various aspects of the education system. Furthermore, the establishment of an inter-agency data and research center is proposed to ensure evidence-based policymaking in education, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach that accounts for climatic conditions, cultural practices, and international benchmarks.

### Recommended Citation:

David, et al. (2024). June or August: Which school year calendar opening is more conducive to learning? *Policy Brief Series* 8 (1), pp. 1-4. Philippine Normal University Educational Policy Research and Development Office.



PNU Educational Policy Research and Development Office  
(+632) 317-1768 loc 751 | eprdc@pnu.edu.ph | www.pnuresearchportal.org

There have been recent calls from various sectors to revert to the basic education school calendar, which traditionally begins in June and ends in March. Results from a commissioned Pulse Asia survey conducted from June 19 to 23, 2023, showed that eight out of 10 Filipinos want to bring back the students' April and May summer break. Moreover, a survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) from June 28 to July 1 showed that about nine in every 10 Filipinos prefer the June-to-March school calendar. In connection with this, House Bill 8550 was filed in the House of Representatives, proposing the restoration of the June-to-March school calendar. This bill aims to revise Section 3 of Republic Act 7797, also recognized as the law that extends the school calendar from two hundred (200) days to a maximum of two hundred twenty (220) class days.

Building on the aforementioned context, this two-part study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on the basic education school calendar. The first part focuses on delineating the preferences of Filipino teachers regarding the commencement of the school year calendar. The second part involves a comparative analysis of basic education school calendars in various ASEAN countries, exploring the reasons behind their adoption. The study employs two distinct research designs to address these objectives. Study 1 utilizes a descriptive online survey method, shedding light on Filipino teachers' preferences. In contrast, Study 2 employs a comparative cross-sectional approach with document analysis to investigate and compare school calendars across ASEAN countries.

### Key Findings

- Utilizing data from an online survey conducted among 1,096 public basic education teachers across various regions in the Philippines, Study 1 reveals that 85.9% of the teacher-respondents favored commencing the school year in June, while 14.15% preferred August. The primary reasons behind the teachers' preference for a June start of classes were Climate and Weather Considerations and the Health of Students, ranking highest among several criteria for selecting the month of school opening. Qualitative analysis results indicated that the June-to-March school calendar is perceived as more conducive to learning than the August-to-May schedule, primarily due to the elevated heat index during the final quarter of the school year. The teacher-respondents also identified other factors influencing their preference for the opening month.
- The results of the qualitative data analysis (Table 1) show that the teacher respondents' reasons for their preference for school opening are related to school, health, family, and

tradition. The most typical reasons provided are related to health and school. Regarding school-related reasons, the most typical reasons refer to April and May being less conducive to teaching and learning. Interestingly, the teacher-respondents discussed the importance of the health of both teachers and students.

Table 1  
*Teacher-Respondents' Reasons for Their Preference of School Opening*

Themes	Sub-themes
School-related reasons	Conduciveness to teaching and learning <sup>1</sup> Inadequate school facilities during summer <sup>1</sup> Less suspension of classes <sup>2</sup> Alignment of school calendar with international practice <sup>2</sup> Avoidance to new adjustment <sup>2</sup>
Health-related reasons	Teachers and students' health <sup>1</sup>
Family and tradition-related reasons	Family bonding time <sup>1</sup> Cultural appropriateness <sup>1</sup> Participation in income-generating activities during summer <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Reasons for June Opening of Classes; <sup>2</sup>Reasons for August Opening of Classes

- The analysis of the country's trend on typhoons indicated an almost insignificant variance within the past three school years in terms of typhoons. The June to March calendar accounts for 16.8% of typhoons, whereas the August to May calendar has a share of 15.65%. Regarding public holidays, the June to March academic calendar observes fewer public holidays (13 in total) compared to the August to May schedule (18 in total). Table 2 shows the comparison between two prospective scenarios for school opening.

Table 2  
*Comparison between Two Prospective Scenarios for School Opening*

Period (10 months)	Average Number of Typhoons	Number of Definite Holidays
June to March	16.8	13
August to May	15.65	18

- Results from Study 2 were sourced from the policies and practices of the education systems of the nine ASEAN countries. A comparative analysis of the school data and



related constructs (e.g., climatic conditions, cultural and religious practices, economic aspects, policies, and platforms for dissemination) to school duration and school opening provides a broad glimpse of how these school data and related constructs weave and interrelate with one another to form policies on the latter. It should be noted that most ASEAN countries (except the Philippines) operated not so differently from the pre-pandemic and in the post-pandemic periods.

5. SEA countries with shorter and almost the same number of school calendar days as the Philippines performed exceptionally well in PISA, confirming that there are no established correlations between the length of the school calendar and student performance.
6. Comparable experiences of severe atmospheric or climatic conditions within the year (e.g., typhoons, haze, flooding) propelled other SEA countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei to match school opening with the fiscal year (i.e., January school opening). Other SEA countries (e.g., Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Lao, and Cambodia) chose to open in the last month of the rainy season.
7. In the Philippines, the education system operated differently from the pre-pandemic operations in learning modality, learning expectations and competencies, and school opening. Furthermore, the Philippine school opening highly deviates from the common reasons of SEA countries (fiscal year and end month of rainy season). The Philippines opted for the August opening for internationalization purposes and pandemic adjustments.

### Key Recommendations

Integrating the results of both Study 1 and Study 2, the researchers offer the following recommendations:

1. There is a need to revisit current and related policies on the basic education school calendar. The study's results strongly suggest a shift from the August or September opening to the reasonable preference of most key stakeholders (i.e., June opening) or to match the fiscal year parallel with many SEA countries (i.e., January opening). When deciding on the school calendar, policy-makers must consider factors like climatic conditions and cultural practices, just like other Southeast Asian countries have explicitly done.
2. Regardless of whether the path is January or June opening, the following considerations should be observed: (1) The

transition should be gradual (e.g., 2-3 years), similar to what Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam did; (2) The Department of Education (DepEd) should consider incorporating shorter breaks (one week after each quarter's examinations, totaling to three weeks) to compensate for the reduced school year break; (3) To prevent a shortened break between school years – a situation that research literature also suggests is unfavorable for learning, DepEd may consider shortening the current school year (2023-2024) or the next school year (2024-2025) to ensure students have a break between school years.

3. A law that may supersede RA 7797 to accommodate all school data should be created. All school data means that the new law will cover not only the school calendar, class hours, and the start of the school year but should also accommodate the following:
  - a. School opening;
  - b. Length of school year;
  - c. Class hours;
  - d. Suspension rules (include half-day suspensions);
  - e. Within school year breaks (e.g., mid-term break, mid-year break);
  - f. Modular/asynchronous modalities during the wet season; and
  - g. Modular/online synchronous sessions during extremely hot season.
4. The Philippines needs to create an inter-agency data and research center directly reporting to the Office of the President to provide substantive evidence-based research in formulating education policies such as the school calendar policies.



### *About the Authors*

**Adonis P David** is a Professor of Counseling and Psychology at the College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research at the Philippine Normal University, where he currently serves as the Vice President for Research, Planning, and Quality Assurance. His current research interests center on the psychological well-being of teachers and counselors, gender and education, and career development.

**Allen A Espinosa** is an Associate Professor of Science Education and is currently the Director of the Educational Policy Research and Development Center of the Philippine Normal University. His current research interests span a broad range of topics, including policy research in education, teacher education, information disorder, and social justice in education.

**Marie Paz E Morales** is a University Professor of Science Education at the College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research at the Philippine Normal University. She also serves as the Director of the Publication Office.

**Gilbert S Arrieta** is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Management and Program Adviser of Educational Leadership and Management at the College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research at the Philippine Normal University. His research interests are on educational leadership, supervision of instruction, technology integration, curriculum and instruction, and student discipline.

**Ruel A Avilla** is an Associate Professor of Science Education and is currently the Director of the Center for Planning and Quality Assurance of the Philippine Normal University. His research interests include curriculum and pedagogy in science education, STEAM education, and TPACK in science education.

**Alvin B Barcelona** is an Assistant Professor of Educational Research and Evaluation at the Faculty of Education and Information Sciences of the Philippine Normal University. His current research interests include assessment of learning, program evaluation, and mathematics education.

**Joseph P Erfe** is an Assistant Professor of the Philippine Normal University-Institute of Teaching and Learning. He handles the field studies and practice teaching courses for English education and culture and arts majors. His research interests include curriculum and instruction, gender-fair education, applied music pedagogy, and English language instruction.

**Daryl Roy T Montebon** is an Associate Professor of Science Education and is currently the Director of the Institute of Teaching and Learning of the Philippine Normal University. His research spans K to 12 science education, educational technology, and sustainable development, with numerous publications and awards.

**Shila Rose D Sia-Pastor** is an Associate Professor of Science Education and currently the officer-in-charge of the Office of the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Science, Technology, and Mathematics of the Philippine Normal University. Her current research interests are in science education, specifically on Earth and Space Science education.

**Nikolee Marie A Serafico-Reyes** is an Assistant Professor of Social Science Education at the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the Philippine Normal University. She teaches pedagogical content knowledge courses in social studies and supervises practice teachers. Her research interests are on curriculum history, social studies, and history education.

**Abegail A Soliman** is Master Teacher II and Assistant to the Principal at San Juan National High School in the Division of San Juan City. She recently completed her PhD in Science Education at the Philippine Normal University. Her dissertation focused on inquiry-based instruction in blended learning delivery.

**Jayson L de Vera** is an Assistant Professor of Science Education at the Faculty of Science, Technology, and Mathematics of the Philippine Normal University. His current research interests include GEDSI, curriculum and pedagogy, and issues in science education.



## **The PNU Educational Policy Research, and Development Office**

The EPRDO is a specialized research center in the University focused on policy research and studies on teacher education. It is established to provide research-based policy recommendation to policy makers. It also serves as the clearing house for all data relevant to teacher education in the Philippines and beyond.

### **Vision**

The Philippine Normal University through the EPRDO aims to be innovation hub of teacher education research and educational policy studies.

### **Mission**

To strengthen the culture of excellence in teacher education research and educational policy studies.

### **Objectives**

The EPRDO shall manage the University's research production, enhance human resource capabilities, and share expertise to other Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the area of teacher education research

### **Strategies**

1. Establish and maintain a web-based university research portal that facilitates automated research management system and which also serves as the database of teacher education policies and teacher education research in country and Southeast Asia.
2. Share research expertise and competence in teacher education research with other TEIs throughout the country;
3. Develop and disseminate the University research agenda
4. Design and implement the research capability program for faculty and staff;
5. Manage University's research production particularly the conduct of educational policy studies in education and teacher education; and
6. Serve as the implementing arm for research incentives and research ethics review.

### **Values**

**SYNERGY** (Working collaboratively as a team)

**EFFICIENCY** (Delivering research services efficiently)

**EXCELLENCE** (Achieving high quality research outputs)

**PRODUCTIVITY** (increasing research production of the University)

The **Policy Brief Series** aims to provide observations, analyses, and insights by PNU faculty and researchers on various educational policy issues. The views contained in the policy briefs are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the University.

The **Policy Brief Series** is published monthly by the **Philippine Normal University Educational Policy Research and Development Office** (PNU-EPRDO). The PNU-EPRDO oversees the editing, compiling, and printing of the policy brief.

### **Editors**

Term 1, SY 2023-2024

**Allen A Espinosa, PhD**

*Director*

**Edna Luz R Abulon, PhD**

**Tito C Baclagan, PhD**

**Ma Victoria C Hermosisima, PhD *cand***

**Ma Arsenia C Gomez, PhD**

**Praksis A Miranda, PhD**

**Nina Christina L Zamora, PhD**

*Faculty Researchers*

**Lorephil P Carloman**

**Maria Luz V Rantael**

*Support Staff*

### *Address*

Room 204, Pedro Orata Hall

Philippine Normal University, Manila, Philippines 1000

<https://www.facebook.com/pnueprdo>

