

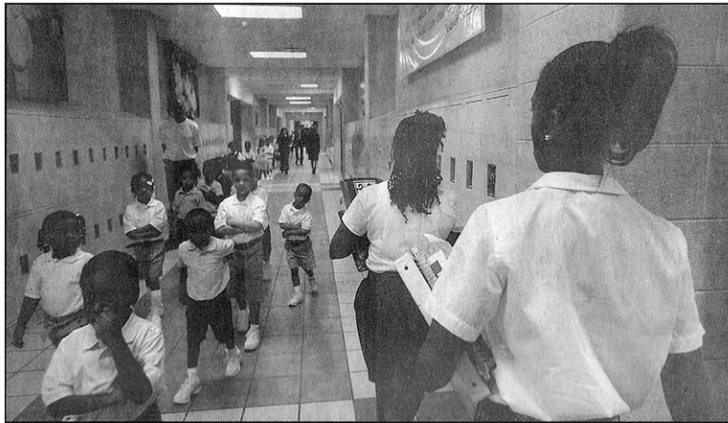
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Families, Educators Embrace Extra Days

Kids moan but soon realize the benefits

By Lori Higgins; Free Press Education Writer



ANDRE J. JACKSON/Detroit Free Press

Students head off to class at a Cornerstone School in Detroit on May 26. They'll be in school through mid-July. Ernestine Sanders, president of Cornerstone Schools, said the longer school year prevents kids from losing what they've learned during a long summer vacation.

For most students, Memorial Day signals the imminent end of a long school year, and that's exactly what Tiffany Hudson was thinking last year, her first at the private Cornerstone Schools campus on Detroit's east side.

Then she learned what her mother had been keeping from her for months -- that Cornerstone is one of the few schools in metro Detroit that operate on an extended calendar. In Cornerstone's case, it's an 11-month school year that runs into mid-July. And Tiffany wasn't pleased.

"I was kind of miserable because all my other friends were out of school," said Tiffany, 14,

an eighth-grader. But she grew to appreciate the academic benefits.

"We learn more," Tiffany said. "You get to cram more stuff in."

The longer school year has been part of Cornerstone's mission since the first school opened in 1991, said Ernestine Sanders, president of the schools. The longer year expands learning opportunities for children and prevents them from losing what they've learned during a long summer vacation, Sanders said.

And parents, Sanders said, "have absolutely embraced it."

The same could be said for the students who attend the International Academy of

Macomb in Clinton Township. Students at the new school began classes Aug. 13 and will end the school year June 18 -- for a total of 190 instructional days. That's standard for schools following the rigorous International Baccalaureate curriculum.

The extra time in schools is necessary because of the demanding curriculum, Principal Lillian Demas said.

Zack Speck, 15, one of the school's 119 students, said there's an added benefit to an extended school year, beyond the academics. Zack, a freshman from Chesterfield Township, said he's gotten to know his classmates much better.

"It can be a good thing," Zack said.

