

Why was it necessary for the state to enact compulsory school attendance laws?

The delegates to the 1850/1851 constitutional convention determined that the state must provide a thorough and efficient system of common schools but did not specify the length of the school year or establish compulsory attendance.

The 1853 legislation that enabled the constitutional provision for the common school system set the stage for a longer minimum school year and student attendance requirements.

The school year and compulsory school attendance were expanded slowly during the last half of the 19th century due to widespread resistance from a sector of the population to compulsory attendance. Many parents required their children to work on farms and in factories and thus, schooling was a low priority for them.

The enactment of child labor laws (which Ohio legislators are beginning to erode) was a factor in establishing a longer school year and universal compulsory attendance.

Compulsory attendance and a 9 month long school year eventually became widely accepted by the early 1900's. However in recent years, with the advent of reduced regulations in the charter school industry, online charter schools, unregulated homeschooling, and universal vouchers, the potential of avoidance of compulsory attendance is a definite likelihood.