

MCCPTA Calendar Committee
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Committee Report
September 30, 2007

Summary notes from meeting held September 28, 2007 with MCPS

We attended this meeting to represent the interests of the members of MCCPTA for the creation of the MCPS calendar for the 2008-2009 school year. Along with this document, we have attached copies of 1) the email sent via MCCPTA_Bulletin to solicit feedback, 2) the survey resulting from that feedback that was presented to the Delegates on September 25, 2007 at the DA, and 3) a summary of the feedback from that second survey. We brought the top three results to the table at the meeting, plus looked at one of the other popular options from the preliminary survey.

The three calendars used by MCPS were explained:

- 1) The Board adopted calendar, which has only Holidays and full day dismissals, and will be approved by the BOE in November
- 2) The Operations Calendar, which contains exams and half days, and summer teacher events and is released around the time of Spring Break (NOTE: The BOE does not approve early release days)
- 3) The Comprehensive calendar, which contains everything, and is released July 1

The meeting attended was the initial feedback-solicitation from various community stakeholders (NAACP, MCCPTA, and other local organizations). We were cautioned that the calendar we were working with is a draft document and is not to be publicly released. After this feedback session, our recommendations are considered and noted. The calendar then moves on to meetings with other stakeholders: Students, the Executive School Leadership team, which includes the Community Superintendents, Union reps, Human Resources Reps, and finally the Board of Education.

MCCPTA representatives made the following recommendations:

Start school on a Tuesday, with Monday slated for Open House for schools

The reasoning given for this recommendation by MCCPTA is that it gives many families one last weekend in August for family vacation. The committee members were very receptive, although there were 2 main concerns: First, that this might negatively impact families that have children in daycare and secondly, under the altered schedule, middle and high school bus runs will still occur on the preceding Thursday and Friday along with their orientations, thereby negating the benefit for families of older students having one last weekend before school starts.

All half-days scheduled on Fridays or Mondays

In the draft calendar presented to us, Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled on Monday and Tuesday, with Veteran's Day falling on a Tuesday in 2008. MCPS has linked the P/T Conference

and Veteran's Day so that Federal employees will be able to attend conferences without taking a day off. We made a recommendation to move the Conference days to the Friday before and Monday, instead, thus making Veteran's Day not a conference day. However, report cards, used during parent-teacher conferences, wouldn't be available on that Friday before because it is too close to the end of the marking period and they won't be printed by that time. The calendar stood as proposed.

The issue of missing so many Mondays was discussed, because in the past it has been noted that students receiving special education services, or even the elementary school "specials" such as music and PE and art, are impacted very heavily. During the discussion it was stated that each school is supposed to come up with a way to address this issue by adjusting the schedule to accommodate Mondays so that this does not adversely impact students.

Half-day on the day before Thanksgiving

Everyone was in complete agreement with the MCCPTA issue of having a half-day before Thanksgiving. In fact, the MCPS staff brought it up before we could even mention it. There was extensive discussion of the fact that some people want it to be a full day off, but it would have to be made a Holiday in that event, and it was too costly to do that (\$7 million in estimation by MCPS staff). But a half-day costs nothing extra, so it is a viable option. They also briefly discussed absenteeism statistics and stated that absenteeism on that day is not greater than any regular Friday or Monday. However, MCPS staff noted that this recommendation has been proposed in past years and has not been approved as the calendar made it further along the chain.

There was a lot of discussion of the scheduling at the end of the first semester. As currently proposed, there would be two professional days the two days after the MLK Holiday, thus creating a 5 day weekend. However, if they were to adopt the MCCPTA request of starting school on a Tuesday, with open houses on Monday, that creates a problem. This is because the length of the semester was already short – 89 days - and in order to try and keep the professional days linked to a weekend, it would require the lengthening of the semester, because further shortening would be untenable. This would then push back when the report cards were ready, and one of the community representatives was highly concerned about what impact that would have on the mid-year grade reports sent to colleges for seniors.

This change of starting school on a Tuesday also had further ripple effects in April with the end of the third marking period and Spring Break. Because of when Spring Break falls, the length of the third marking period would be impacted. It is not allowed to have teachers turn in their grades and then leave for a long break, since there are invariably problems or errors, and this would significantly delay the release of report cards. So, trying to move the end of the third marking period around, and the placement of the end of marking period professional day, is limited by the beginning of Spring Break in 2009.

Plan Calendar out further than 9 months and longer notification time

We had been told that testing dates (from the state) do not drive the calendar, but when it was brought up at the meeting, we were told it could. So, we are getting conflicting information on that issue. MCPS staff at the meeting felt that this request was not possible.