

Calendar Testimony presented at December 12th BOE Meeting:

Good morning members of the Board of Education. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about the 2007-2008 proposed school calendar. I have been a member of the calendar committee for two years and have seen improvements such as the proposed four day weekend in January. In preparation for this meeting, the two other MCCPTA representatives and I reached out and received feedback from over 120 parents and brought those comments to the table.

We realize that MCPS wants to utilize the days before Labor Day to increase performance on standardized tests. However, we asked that MCPS hold its elementary Open Houses on Monday instead of Friday and start school the following Tuesday. There are over 56,000 elementary school students in MCPS; therefore Open House affects a substantial parent population. Currently, many parents must choose between cutting their family vacation time short in order to have their children attend Open House or have their children miss out on this event completely. Open House is a unique and beneficial opportunity for children to meet their new teachers and explore their classrooms in a more relaxed environment. By moving Open House to a Monday instead of a Friday, families would be able to have both their necessary family time and allow their children the chance to participate in this important event. I realize that MCPS is concerned that possible use of contingency days would cause school to end on a Monday instead of Friday. In the past 8 years, our school system has gone over its allotted contingency days 3 times. While this is a possibility, helping families start the school year in a more positive and prepared frame of mind would be a reality. I urge you to reconsider the start date of school for 2007-2008 and have it begin on Tuesday, August 28th.

MCPS's effort in coordinating most professional days to be on Mondays or Fridays is appreciated by parents. The unintended consequence of this is that some elementary school students who have specials or services on those days may not be getting their fair share of them.

FY 2008 School Calendar

Number of Times a Day of the Week Occurs on the Calendar:

Mondays: 34

Tuesdays: 38

Wednesdays: 40

Thursdays: 37

Fridays: 36

Leaving the solution to individual schools causes vast inconsistencies as providers are often itinerant at the elementary school level. Creative steps are needed to ensure that all our kids receive their equal time for special services, such as making (2) Wednesdays a year work on a Monday schedule. Many colleges and universities commonly make such adjustments in their calendars.

Parents find the school calendar invaluable in arranging after-school care, days off and half-day off childcare arrangements and vacations. They would like a true opportunity to review and provide feedback on the proposed calendar by extending the comment period beyond the 5 days notice given.

We remind you that in 2004, the MCCPTA Delegate Assembly passed a resolution asking for calendars to be released several years in advance or at the very least, to provide start and end dates for the school year, and winter and spring breaks well in advance.

Thank you for your time.

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