

Office of the Chief Operating Officer
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

July 12, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Policy Management Committee

From: Andrew M. Zuckerman, Chief Operating Officer

Subject: 2018–2019 School Year Calendar

Board of Education Policy IDA, *School Year Calendar*, calls for the Policy Management Committee to review the draft 2018–2019 School Year Calendar prior to its presentation to the full Board for adoption. This memorandum provides a general outline of the calendar parameters for the 2018–2019 school year, as well as other scheduling elements that will need to be considered as the calendar is developed.

Days of Instruction

The overall time frame of the school year calendar established by Governor Larry Hogan’s Executive Order of August 31, 2016 (amended October 11, 2016), remains in place for the 2018–2019 school year. The general parameters of the calendar based on the Executive Order and the school closings that are mandated by state law are as follows:

- First day of school: Tuesday, September 4, 2018
- Friday, June 14, 2019: Last permissible day of instruction

Closings required by state law:

- Tuesday, November 6, 2018: Election Day
- Thursday, November 22 and Friday, November 23, 2018: Thanksgiving and the day after
- Monday, December 24, 2018 through Tuesday, January 1, 2019: Christmas Eve through January 1
- Monday, January 21, 2019: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Monday, February 18, 2019: Presidents’ Day
- Friday, April 19, 2019: Good Friday
- Monday, April 22, 2019: Easter Monday
- Monday, May 27, 2019: Memorial Day

Policy IDA provides that “the Board may determine that schools should be closed at other times in furtherance of other educational or operational needs.” Historically, the Board has identified an operational need to close school on two days of religious observance, Rosh Hashanah (Monday, September 10, 2018) and Yom Kippur (Wednesday, September 19, 2018). In 2018, both days fall on school days. These closings would add two noninstructional days to the calendar.

Emergency Closings

The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires that school systems do two things to be eligible for a waiver from the 180-day requirement: 1) make adjustments to make up instruction within the school year calendar; and 2) show that the school year has been extended by five days. In order to comply with this regulation, the calendar will have to include noninstructional days during the year that can be added if necessary to modify the calendar in the event of extensive closings. In addition, extending the school year by five days would require that the 180th day of scheduled instruction, the minimum number required by state law, must be on or before June 7.

The state has proposed an amendment to COMAR 13A.02.01.04, *Length of School Year*, that would reduce from five to three the number of days by which school systems must extend their calendars in order to obtain a waiver of the 180-day school year requirement when necessary.

On June 28, 2017, the Board wrote a letter to the Maryland State Department of Education strongly supporting this proposed amendment which would provide much needed flexibility for local jurisdictions. For example, if the proposed amendment is adopted and the year must only be extended by three days, then the 180th day of scheduled instruction must be on or before June 12, 2019. The additional two days will be critical in providing flexibility for scheduling educational and operational priorities in the school year calendar. The State Board of Education is scheduled to take final action on the proposal on August 22, 2017.

Other Calendar Elements

If Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is closed for only the days required by state law and for the two additional operational closures for religious observances and open every other possible day, then the 180th day, the minimum number of instructional days required under state law, is Wednesday, June 5, 2019.

Assuming that the proposed amendment on the length of the school year is adopted, this would leave four additional days that could be scheduled as noninstruction and still meet the end of year guidelines. If it is not adopted, there are only two days that can be scheduled as noninstruction and still meet the end of year guidelines.

Whether there are two or four additional days for consideration, there are several scheduling interests to consider in how to structure the calendar for 2018–2019 school year.

- **Spring Break:** State law requires only that schools be closed on the Friday before and the Monday after Easter, which would result in a four day spring break (including weekends). MCPS has traditionally taken a much longer spring break, usually one full week and either the Friday before or the Monday after Easter, resulting in 10 total days of break (including weekends). If four days are available and all four are programmed as noninstructional around the state mandated Easter closings, MCPS could schedule a spring break the same length as in previous years.
- **Emergency Make-up Days:** COMAR requires that schools make adjustments to make up instruction within the school year calendar. This would require identifying noninstructional days

that could be scheduled for instruction if needed due to closures. In the 2017–2018 calendar, these days are identified as the one full professional day between first and second semester and the first two days of spring break. In the 2018–2019 school year, these days could coincide with additional days of spring break, if they are available to schedule.

- **Professional Days:** MCPS has traditionally scheduled one full noninstructional day for planning and grading at the end of each quarter. In the 2017–2018 school year, it was not possible to program all of these full noninstructional days within the student instructional school calendar. As noted, one full day was scheduled between the first and second semester, and half days for planning and grading were scheduled at the end of each quarter.
- **Days of Instruction:** The 180th day of instruction is the state required minimum. For many years, MCPS scheduled 184 days. In the 2017–2018 calendar, it was not possible to schedule 184 days, and the 2017–2018 calendar includes 182 days of instruction. Whether additional days of instruction can be scheduled above the 180 day minimum ultimately depends on what decisions are made regarding spring break, emergency make-up days, and other calendar elements.

Next Steps

Following the Policy Management Committee’s discussion, staff will develop calendar scenarios for the Board’s consideration this fall. It also will be helpful to develop these scenarios once the State Board of Education has determined whether to amend COMAR to reduce the number of days for extending the school year. Once the parameters are more certain, staff will seek feedback on the scenarios from community stakeholders to bring to the Board discussion this fall.

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