

Calvert County Public Schools

Nancy V. Highsmith, Interim Superintendent of Schools

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February 7, 2014

Mr. William Cappe
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Mr. Cappe:

I am writing to recommend that Maryland public school systems continue to have autonomy in determining their annual operational calendars. Each year, Calvert County Public Schools convenes a calendar committee for this purpose.

The calendar committee consists of a number of stakeholders, including community members, parents, union representatives, and employees. Constituent groups include, but are not limited to, the Citizens' Advisory Council, the Calvert County Council of Parents/Teachers Association, the Calvert Education Association, the Calvert Association of Educational Support Staff, the Calvert Association of Supervisors and Administrators, the Local Accountability Coordinator, the Director of Finance, a representative from the Department of Instructional and Information Technology, and the committee chairperson.

Following a series of meetings last winter, the calendar committee presented to our Executive Team and Board of Education a proposed operational calendar for the 2014-2015 school year. The proposed calendar was posted for public review and comment for a period of thirty (30) days. Upon completion of the review period, the Board of Education has the option to approve with or without revisions or to remand the calendar back to the committee for further study. The operational calendar for 2014-2015 has already been approved by the Board of Education and presented to the public.

In the development of the operational calendar, the committee considers a number of factors including federal holidays, federal/state/local elections (schools are used as polling sites), national/state/local testing mandates and schedules, local community events, negotiated agreements with employee associations, professional staff development needs and requirements, opportunities to hold parent/teacher conferences, contingencies for national/state/local emergencies and inclement weather, and other community needs or preferences.

In Calvert County, the first school day for students has traditionally occurred before Labor Day. This year, August 20, 2013, was the first day for students. For 2014-2015, the first school day for students will be August 19, 2014. The first school day for students is usually the last date set during calendar development since days in August must be added so that the calendar satisfies the annual requirement of 180 school days for students.

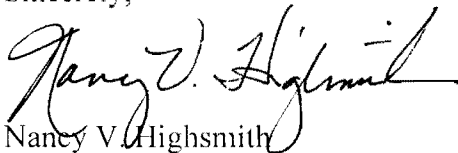
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Our operational calendar has traditionally contained other events based on the interests of our community, parents, and staff, such as:

- Youth Day – opportunity for students and their families to attend the Calvert County Fair
- Winter Recess – length of break varies depending where Christmas and New Year's Day fall on the calendar
- Spring Recess – usually occurs either the week before or after Easter Sunday
- Contingency days – five (5) school days are built-in to allow for closings due to emergencies and/or inclement weather

In closing, I want to reiterate that the loss of autonomy in the operational calendar development process would negatively impact our ability to establish an operational calendar that is conducive to student learning and sensitive to the interests of our community. On behalf of our students, employees, parents, community members, and Board of Education, I strongly recommend that Maryland public school systems continue to have autonomy in determining their annual operational calendars.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy V. Highsmith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and a stylized "H".

Nancy V. Highsmith
Interim Superintendent