



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MARYLAND

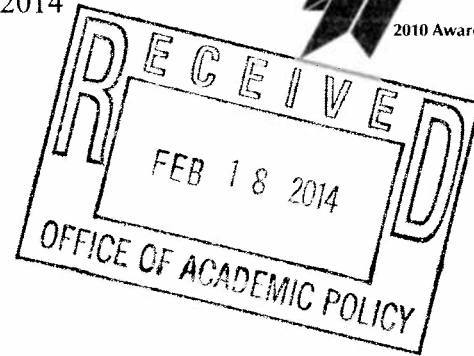
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

February 6, 2014



Malcolm Baldrige
National Quality Award

2010 Award Recipient



Mr. William Cappe, Chair
Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day
Start Date for Maryland Public Schools
Division of Educator Effectiveness
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595

Dear Mr. Cappe,

We are writing to provide our strong support for the current practice of providing autonomy to local school districts to establish their own school year calendars. We have serious concerns that any recommendation otherwise will infringe on the decision making of local districts to exercise their own judgment on when to open schools—decisions that are contingent on a variety of variables that districts are uniquely positioned to consider. We urge you to recommend the current practice whereby local districts determine their own school calendars.

Each year, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) forms a calendar committee comprising a broad range of stakeholders to consider future-year school year calendars. Our calendar committee takes into consideration a range of factors before making its recommendation to the Board of Education for approval. For the past 12 years, and for many years prior, local preference has been to open schools before Labor Day. This is the local decision that has been made in collaboration with our community and our employee associations. We firmly believe that starting the school year before Labor Day with a full five-day week allows for us to generate instructional momentum at the optimal time for our students, and the feedback from this practice has been overwhelmingly positive from our local community.

Delaying the start of school to after Labor Day will end this practice, and it will push school very late into June. This will impact our summer schools and extended school year programs, as well as our partnerships with organizations, such as summer camps, which provide extracurricular options for students during the summer. We also program for extensive professional development in June, the time we find yields the best results for these activities. Our school schedules have been built around this schedule, and changing them will have a tremendous impact on tens of thousands of families unnecessarily.

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

850 Hungerford Drive, Room 122 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850 ♦ 301-279-3381

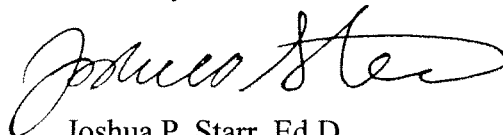
MCPS factors other variables into our local decision making for creating our school calendar. These variables include but are not limited to:

- University partnerships and the start of summer graduate school enrollment
- State and local testing windows
- Local community events
- Creating the best learning environment for students
- Local preference of students, parents, employee associations, and community members

Should the Task Force recommend anything other than the current practice, it will be recommending to end local autonomy to make decisions that we believe are in the best interest of students and that have allowed MCPS to succeed. We ask that you continue the current practice that has worked so well for so long.

Thank you for your support for the students, staff, and families of MCPS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua Starr", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JPS:slh