



Calendar Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 5, 2020; 4:00 p.m.
Central Administration Office

Members present: Superintendent Shon Hocker, Assistant Superintendent Keith Harris, Director of Instruction Melanie Kathrein, Community Relations Coordinator Sarah Trustem, Mr. Karl Leggate (Berg Elementary representative), Mrs. Dinah Eslinger (Jefferson Elementary representative), Mrs. Tavia Kuntz (District-wide PAC representative), Mrs. Kari Sayler (District-wide PAC representative), Mrs. Diana Stroud (Dickinson Middle School representative), Ms. Brenda Loney (Dickinson High School representative), Mrs. Tammy Meschke (Roosevelt Elementary representative), Ms. Jill Nelson-Wetzstein (Lincoln Elementary representative), Mrs. Haley Marsh (Prairie Rose Elementary representative), Mrs. Shawna Knipp (DEA president), and Mrs. Paris Hill (Heart River Elementary representative).

Others present: Ms. Leann Mehrer.

The meeting was called to order by Superintendent Hocker at 4:00 p.m. He thanked the representatives for attending the work session to review the calendar for the 2020-2021 school year to be presented to the school board. A draft calendar that had received input from the Cabinet had been emailed to the committee before the meeting.

Dr. Hocker explained the legislative change last year transforming the student contact hours from days to hours. Due to this change, snow days are not required. Mr. Leggate inquired why the change. Superintendent Hocker explained the calendar has 175 student contact days as well as the holidays and other dates listed on the bottom of the calendar. Assistant Superintendent Harris added the 175 contact days are from the Professional Negotiated Agreement.

Superintendent Hocker explained the days off during the school year drives the last day of school. Mrs. Kuntz inquired if it has been discussed to start school after Labor Day. Dr. Hocker responded it has been discussed numerous times by this committee. Starting after Labor Day will determine that school will go past Memorial Day. Most of the time the District groups do not wish to go into June. Mrs. Kuntz said when she grew up school went into June and started after Labor Day. It is frustrating for her that school does not go into June and does not start in September. Dr. Hocker added that the extra-curricular activities start earlier. It is difficult to commit students to come a month before the start of school. Students must practice two weeks to be eligible to participate in the first competition. Starting school after Labor Day would be more of a change than proposed on the calendar.

Mrs. Stroud referenced three professional development days at the beginning of the school year. Having the three PD days right before the open houses and before school starts does not leave time for teachers to prepare their classrooms. They need more time to prepare. Dr. Hocker responded the administrative plan is to provide some flexibility within each building. The plan is to have one day for building-planned professional development, one day for teacher-planned professional development, and one day for district-wide professional development. The District has already secured a District-wide presenter for Tuesday, August 18.

Mrs. Meschke explained summer school ends and on the draft it appears school would start shortly thereafter. Two weeks is not enough time to get the classroom ready between summer school and regular school. She has heard from her building a request to start school on August 24. Mr. Harris responded if

the starting date would be backed up then there would need to be some days added back in or school could go into June.

Ms. Loney thought having the three professional development days all together is too much and starting school on August 20 was too early. She added the District traditionally starts before Labor Day, but typically not two full weeks. Students transferring into the District from another state may not realize school is in session before Labor Day. It would not be good for morale to have the three professional development days together at the beginning of the school year.

Mr. Leggate said at Berg almost every person asked to have school on March 29-31 and have off from school on Good Friday and Easter Monday. There was a discussion regarding finding daycare for a full week of spring break and what to do when RASP is closed. Mrs. Sayler said as a working mom she was wondering where she was going to get childcare if there was no school for an entire week. Dr. Hocker said he has heard the opposite with requests for a dedicated spring break. That way travel groups can plan things.

Mrs. Kathrein explained when there was a conversation with the Cabinet members they felt an opportunity to have two full weeks for Christmas does not happen very often. This would be an opportunity for those that travel a long distance. Many have extended families that do not live here. Elementary schools report it is more difficult to have frequent three-day breaks than one week off. At the elementary level, bigger chunks of time are valued.

Ms. Mehrer referenced athletics and said those parents with students in winter sports will not be taking a week off at Christmas. Dr. Hocker concurred.

Mrs. Kuntz inquired what the teachers thought of going to school into June. Several teachers responded that they do not like going into June or after Memorial Day. They listed many reasons. Mrs. Kuntz said as a parent she dislikes school starting in August, it is still light outside at night. Having gaps when RASP is closed was noted.

Having one professional development day on the 18th and possibly another one around the 18th and possibly starting school on August 26 was suggested by Mrs. Marsh. Mr. Harris said that could be done. Identifying days to add back in could then be discussed. There was a discussion regarding getting their classroom ready at the beginning of the school year. Mr. Leggate felt it would need to be more than one day. Mrs. Kathrein clarified that the teacher's workday is not part of professional development.

An option was to have a half-day workday at the beginning of the school year and a half-day workday at the end of the school year. This had been done in the past and the pros and cons were shared with this idea.

Mrs. Kuntz inquired if the teachers like having Presidents' Day off. Teachers responded they did like that day off. Mrs. Kuntz likes the three-day weekend. Teachers responded if the students and teachers do not have family around here, they are not traveling to visit family and have to fill in that extra day. Mr. Leggate suggested at the beginning of the school year to start around September 2 and have three days of school the first week, then four days of school the second week, and five days of school the third week. He also inquired if the seniors could get out earlier than the other students. Ms. Loney explained the challenges with quarter testing if the seniors are done earlier. Dr. Hocker said if several student contact days were removed before Labor Day, they would need to be added back into the calendar.

Ms. Mehrer suggested having the professional development day on August 18, have a half-day workday on the 19th, have professional development on August 24 and 25th and start school on August 26. Mr. Leggate said that would give other opportunities for open houses. Mrs. Kuntz inquired if the teachers had to have off on Veterans Day. Teachers responded it was a paid holiday. Mrs. Kuntz asked if the schools

could be in session on December 21 and 22nd. Mr. Harris suggested determining if the committee was in favor of Ms. Mehrer's suggestion and if so, then try and find the days to add back into the calendar.

Mrs. Meschke inquired if there could be flexibility for the staff to put in four hours for the workday sometime either August 19, 20th or 21st and confirming those four hours with the principal. Dr. Hocker felt that would be something that could be done.

Committee members suggested adding back on March 29, 30th and 31st and removing Easter Monday as a student contact day. Dr. Hocker asked for a show of hands for this revision. The majority were in favor of making those revisions. Mr. Leggate inquired why there was a parent/teacher compensation day on March 5 during the WDA (basketball) tournaments and why there could not be days off during other tournaments such as football and volleyball. Mrs. Kathrein responded the students have traditionally been very supportive in following the basketball teams. One year, the calendar was proposed to the Board with the schools in session on the Friday of WDA tournaments. The school board felt the potential number of absences on that date justified the Board to remove that date as a student contact day. The students will be gone anyway. The Board denied the calendar and asked the day be removed as a student contact day.

The Cabinet will be identifying the early release dates at its meeting on Monday, February 10. Superintendent Hocker said it seemed the committee was in agreement with the changes to the calendar. There were no concerns noted. Dr. Hocker said a revised draft would be sent to the committee soon. He will be presenting the calendar to the school board on Monday for approval.

Ms. Loney requested some information be shared with the administrators regarding early release dates. She requested that early release dates not be scheduled on picture day and that the parent/teacher conferences not be scheduled on early release days. Dr. Hocker referenced the parent/teacher conference days are noted they are scheduled by the building principals. She might have these suggestions shared with the building principal.

Superintendent Hocker thanked the committee for sharing their thoughts and providing input.

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.