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*Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning. It's Union Work!*

October 9, 2017

Dear Members of the MCPS Board of Education:

Over the past several weeks, MCEA has surveyed our members to determine educators' needs and preferences regarding the 2018-2019 school-year calendar. Our members show a clear desire to create an equitable calendar that honors our community's family and faith traditions, promotes student well-being, and ensures academic success for all.

The calendar mandated by Governor Hogan clearly fails to meet the needs of families and children, and it leaves woefully inadequate time for educators to plan, prepare and provide feedback on instruction. Those surveyed quickly recognized the difficulty the Board of Education will have in providing time off for days traditionally observed as holidays by many students and staff in our system. Moreover, educators expressed dismay at the lack of time for student instructional preparation.

Several clear priorities emerged from the survey:

1. The top priority (chosen by 90% of respondents) is to have two non-instructional days added to the state-mandated Easter holidays. The MCEA Representative Assembly voted that these days be 4/23 and 4/24, so as to coincide with Passover.
2. Seventy percent of respondents wish to provide a full 10-day Spring Break to students and staff, as has been MCPS tradition.
3. Seventy percent also would choose to continue the practice of closing school on the dates of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
4. Other popular dates for non-instructional days were at the end of each quarter marking period, when feedback to students and reflection on next steps are most necessary to their success.

Our methodology:

Each member surveyed was shown the student school-year calendar for 2018-2019 that noted only early-dismissal dates and state-mandated school closings. The list of holidays shared by the MCPS Board of Education was provided to help identify dates when it might be desirable to suspend instruction. Respondents then indicated what, if any, dates should be non-instructional days.

MCEA recognizes that the BOE is operating within severe constraints to develop the 2018-2019 calendar. We trust that you will use the information we have collected to create the optimal plan for both our staff and the children we serve. We would welcome discussion with you as you strive to shape the next instructional calendar year in a way that gives educators the time for instructional planning -- for example, by including periodic late-arrival or early-dismissal days -- so that we can provide the high-quality instruction, feedback and support students need to be fully successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer N. Martin". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Jennifer N. Martin  
Vice President