

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: CGA-RA, JEA-RA
Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer
Related Sources: *Annotated Code of Maryland*, Education Article, §7-103
Code of Maryland Regulations, §13A.02.01.04;
Montgomery County Public Schools Guidelines for Respecting Religious Diversity

School Year Calendar

A. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for the Montgomery County Board of Education to develop, adopt, and disseminate a school year calendar prior to the commencement of each school year that furthers the educational interests and operational needs of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

B. ISSUE

The development and dissemination of *School Year Calendar* supports consistent and effective delivery of the instructional program. It provides MCPS students, parents/guardians, staff, and other community members with access to school scheduling information to facilitate planning of the necessary logistics for effective participation in, and support of, school activities. The *School Year Calendar* development process incorporates feedback from a variety of MCPS stakeholders.

The *School Year Calendar* governs the opening and closure of schools across the district. It is developed by the superintendent of schools or his/her designee, approved by the Board, and disseminated to the MCPS community and the broader public prior to the commencement of the school year.

C. POSITION

In developing a recommended *School Year Calendar* for approval by the Board, the superintendent of schools or his/her designee shall give consideration to a variety of

educational interests and operational needs of MCPS including but not limited to the following:

1. Compliance with Minimum Instructional Day and Credit Hour Requirements
Maryland law requires a minimum of 180 instructional days, as well as at least 1170 credit hours for high school students and at least 1080 credit hours for elementary and middle school students.
2. Contingencies for Inclement Weather and Other Emergencies

The *School Year Calendar* shall include a sufficient number of days beyond the Maryland law minimum in the event that inclement weather or other systemwide emergencies may require the closure of schools.

3. Staff Professional Days and Early Release Days

The School Year Calendar designates days when schools are closed, open for school-based staff, but not students, or when students are released early for the following reasons:

- a. Designated staff professional days provide teachers and other school-based staff with valuable opportunities to—
 - 1) implement professional learning communities;
 - 2) collaborate on best practices and instructional strategies;
 - 3) review student data, focusing on specific activities related to the achievement of their students and the teaching and learning process; and
 - 4) plan instructional activities and prepare report cards.
- b. Early release days may be tentatively designated on the *School Year Calendar* for such purposes as interim grade reports and planning, or parent/guardian conferences in elementary and middle schools. The Board designates authority to the superintendent of schools to make such changes in the event these dates need to change.

4. Alignment with Assessment Schedules

The *School Year Calendar* shall be aligned with scheduling for federal, state, MCPS, and other assessments.

5. School Closures Mandated by State Law

Under Maryland law, schools may not operate instructional programs for students on the following holidays:

- a. Thanksgiving Day and the day after;
- b. Christmas Eve and from then through January 1;
- c. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day;
- d. Presidents' Day;
- e. the Friday before Easter and from then through the Monday after Easter;
- f. Memorial Day; and
- g. Primary and general election days.

6. Spring Break, Winter Break

The *School Year Calendar* typically includes multi-day vacation periods in late December–early January and March or April to permit students and their families a break from instructional time. These may be coextensive with other closures.

7. Inauguration Day

When the day of a Presidential Inauguration falls on a school day, that day shall be designated as a MCPS system holiday.

8. Other Operational Needs and Educational Interests

The Board may determine that schools should be closed at other times in furtherance of other educational interests or operational needs:

- a. For example, while each case must be evaluated independently, the likelihood of high absentee rates on any given day for staff and/or students, either systemwide or at a substantial portion of schools, may warrant closure of all schools if necessary to secure educational resources, promote safe school environments when it would otherwise be difficult and costly to identify and hire a sufficient number of substitute teachers, and/or avoid disruption to the delivery of effective and meaningful instruction.

- b. To close schools systemwide on any day other than those mandated by Maryland law, the district must establish that a school closure furthers a secular purpose, such as any of the operational needs or educational interests enumerated above. A student's observance of a religious holiday is an excused absence under Maryland law.

D. DESIRED OUTCOME

MCPS will provide a standard *School Year Calendar* that allows for the effective use of time for teaching and learning, for professional growth opportunities, and planning instructional strategies focused on improving student achievement.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. Adoption of *School Year Calendar*

The superintendent of schools shall recommend a proposed calendar for the following school year to be reviewed and adopted by the Board pursuant to the following timeline, absent exceptional circumstances that, in the Board's determination, warrant modification.

- a. Each year, the superintendent of schools or his/her designee will oversee development of the proposed *School Year Calendar* for the following school year. Staff may solicit feedback from a variety of stakeholders as well as neighboring school districts.
- b. No later than early fall, the proposed *School Year Calendar* for the following school year shall be presented to the Board's Policy Management Committee for review.
- c. No later than the end of December, the Board will adopt the *School Year Calendar* for the following school year.
- d. The *School Year Calendar* may be amended subsequent to its adoption, as necessary.

2. Adoption of Contingency *School Year Calendar*

In addition to approving a *School Year Calendar* on an annual basis, the Board shall adopt a contingency calendar indicating the days that could be used to make up student instructional days if the number of closings for weather or other emergencies exceeds state minimum requirements enumerated above.

3. Dissemination of the *School Year Calendar*

Once the Board approves the *School Year Calendar*, as well as the contingency school calendar, the superintendent of schools or his/her designee will make them accessible in a user-friendly format through a variety of mechanisms, including posting on the MCPS website. The *School Year Calendar* may be presented in a way that incorporates other school and community scheduling information as a reference for staff, students, their parents/guardians, and community members. For example, the MCPS website featuring the *School Year Calendar* may include links to the *Days of Commemoration* developed by Montgomery County Executive's Faith Community Working Group to include certain holidays relating to the religious, ethnic, and cultural heritage of Montgomery County residents.

4. School-based calendars

Each school may develop its own school-based calendar to identify special events and other activities that are distinctive to its particular community, such as high school graduation ceremonies, so long as the school-based calendar is consistent with the *School Year Calendar*.

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board policy review process.

Policy History: New policy, adopted by Resolution No.472-15, October 26, 2015.