

School Operations Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 9, 2024 3:15 PM

Tate Hall Conference Room, 615 Olof Hanson Drive, Faribault, MN 55021

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Meeting Minutes Review**
3. **Review of Calendar Survey Results**
4. **Recommend Items on the Draft Calendar for
Second Survey**
5. **Adjourn**



Minutes of School Operations Committee Meeting Minnesota State Academies Board

A School Operations Committee Meeting of the Minnesota State Academies Board was held Monday, December 4, 2023, beginning at 3:15 PM in the Tate Hall Conference Room, 615 Olof Hanson Drive, Faribault, MN 55021.

Present: Superintendent Wilding, Katie Wangberg, Annette Freiheit, Bridget Flier, John Davis, Jody Olson, Ryan Johnson, Brittany Thomforde, Anne Grace Donatucci, Sarah Allen, Mark Schwartz, Sabrina Hubmer, Harry Weber.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:15.

2. Consider the 2024-2025 School Calendar

Superintendent Wilding asked for input for next year's school calendar. Jody Olson asked whether more school days would be added. Superintendent Wilding said that they were working on gradually adding more days each year until we reach 180. We are currently at 175, and are reviewing the budget with Amber Miller, our fiscal services director. During previous meetings with SRSEA, our teachers' union, they have requested that we look at increasing the number of teacher work days along with the additional days of instruction. Last year due to budget limitations and too many unknown factors, we decided not to increase the number of days. It's possible we can do it this year.

Bridget Flier stated that SRSEA members also asked that curriculum development meetings be held during the school year, not during summer. They would be OK with holding curriculum development days during the week before school starts or at the end of the school year.

Anne Grace Donatucci stated that staff attendance/participation has been low at past curriculum development days. Superintendent Wilding will bring this to the next SRSEA meeting.

Anne Grace added that November 7-8, 2024 will be the Collaborative Experience conference. Should these days become professional development days, with MSAD staff attending the conference and offering other training opportunities for the MSAB staff? Harold Weber responded that MSAB staff would not like closing both campuses in November solely for a conference that mainly serves the deaf/hard of hearing population. Instead, he suggested, allow a limited number of MSAD staff to attend the conference (those who sign up first) and allow MSAB staff to attend other conferences later in the school year. He also questioned the need for parent-teacher conferences.

Annette Freiheit asked for clarification on the start date – why does MSA open prior to Labor Day? Superintendent Wilding explained that MSA is exempt from the Labor Day start laws in Minnesota. Annette then asked how many professional

development days and student contact days we normally offer. Superintendent Wilding replied that we have 175 student contact days, with a total of 181 days (including professional development/work days).

Annette then asked if we considered other ethnic holidays. If we plan on doing Easter breaks, we should include other religions. Superintendent Wilding agreed that we are not restricted to specific holidays.

Annette followed up with a question about whether MCA testing would be considered in the calendar planning. Superintendent Wilding affirmed it was. Annette added that MSA should consider best practices surrounding lengthy breaks for families, which can be a burden. Perhaps long weekends should be done instead.

Superintendent Wilding replied that typically MSA tries to align their calendar with Faribault Public Schools, since many of our students take classes there, and many of our staff have children enrolled there.

Katie Wangberg stated that her home school district got rid of spring break, and are doing long weekends instead. This should be among the questions in our survey. The group then discussed the parent-teacher conferences. Harry Weber stated that at MSAB, the overall sentiment was that the conferences were unnecessary, as they have consistently have had a low parent participation rate. Those parents who do show up are usually the same ones that show up annually. He suggested having the entire Thanksgiving week off; if not, move parent-teacher conferences to that week. Sabrina Hubmer added that parent participation varies wildly from classroom to classroom. Some teachers are scheduled for 7 parent conferences, while others do not have any. Typically, parents who have already attended IEP meetings in September or October do not bother showing up at the parent teacher conferences. November might be a good time to have the conferences, as that is when the teachers have a better knowledge of the students' progress to share with families. Annette felt that parent-teacher conferences are important, and this should be added as a question in the survey. An alternative would be to give teachers a specific amount of hours per year to reach out and communicate with families. This would allow for more flexibility in both the teachers' and parents' schedules. Superintendent Wilding liked that idea, but said we would also need to consider the prep time involved in setting up meetings with parents (arranging for sign language interpreters, foreign language translators, etc.).

He added that regarding the Thanksgiving week-long break, he has gotten feedback from staff that did not like having to use their annual leave/go without pay, and still have to pay for childcare for their children.

Katie Wangberg suggested hosting parent engagement nights, where parents would not only get updates on their child's progress, but also updates on school activities and upcoming events.

Sabrina Hubmer wished to add that the proposed July 2 prep day for ESY would be too close to ESY itself. She suggested moving the prep day earlier to May or early June. Superintendent Wilding said that prep time would be given to teachers in May for planning ESY activities. However, the July 2 prep day would focus on familiarization with student IEPs, medical and health plan, as well as other student support needs.

Annette Freiheit asked what the next steps would be. Superintendent Wilding replied that he would distribute a survey based on today's discussion, bring that back to the committee for review, then distribute a second survey, with the goal of the final draft being approved in March.

Sabrina asked whether we could have noon dismissal once a month to give teachers additional prep time. Harry Weber disagreed, stating once a quarter would be better. Superintendent Wilding replied that Friday short days can conflict with Faribault Public Schools' schedules.

Ronda Donatucci suggested that whenever MSAD hosts big tournaments, we should look at closing the school to accommodate the tournaments. Superintendent Wilding replied that we must have a balance between both campuses – closing MSAD would also mean MSAB would unnecessarily have to close. Superintendent Wilding will distribute the survey within a week.

3. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:50.

MSA 2024-2025 School Calendar Survey Results

A total of 55 respondents participated in this survey. Responses are listed from highest to lowest amount of votes.

Q1: For Parents/Families – We have gotten some feedback about having two parent-teacher conference dates during the year (one prior to our October break and one prior to our spring break). In previous years, we've had two dates but it appears that many of our parents/families do not feel that the second conference day is needed due to frequent communication with their child's case manager as well as IEP and other meetings throughout the year. Please select your preferences below.

- Not applicable – I'm not a parent or family member. 54.55% (30 votes)
- Keep two parent/teacher conference dates (October and March). 16.36% (9 votes)
- I prefer to have my child's case manager contact me directly throughout the year. 14.55% (8 votes)
- Keep only the October parent/teacher conference (deleting the March one). 3.64% (2 votes)
- Keep only the March parent/teacher conference (deleting the October one). 3.64% (2 votes)
- Delete both dates – I do not want a parent/teacher conference. 3.64% (2 votes)

Q2: for Parents/Families – If we keep parent/teacher conferences on the schedule, would you prefer an afternoon time or an evening time?

- Not applicable – I'm not a parent or family member. 60% (33 votes)
- Afternoon (between 12:30 – 4 p.m.). 27.27% (15 votes)
- Evening (between 5 – 7 p.m.). 12.73% (7 votes)

Q3: for Parents/Families – How do you feel about half-days on the calendar (i.e., half-days on Fridays)?

- Not applicable – I'm not a parent or family member. 60% (33 votes)
- It doesn't affect me. 20% (11 votes)
- I do not like half-days – it affects our family greatly. 10.91% (6 votes)
- I am ok with a few half-days, but not too often. 9.09% (5 votes)

Q4: for everyone – which holidays should we consider when we develop the calendar? Are there any particular holidays that you think we should incorporate in the calendar (religious, cultural, state/federal, etc.)?

- Indigenous People's Day
- Indigenous day
- We have extra day or more of no school related to holidays or different reasons for every month of the school year except for April. We need to have at least one that month, like Good Friday, or Tax Day in the middle of April to give employees or families at least one long weekend.
- Jewish holidays
- Veteran's Day, Monday after Easter
- N/A.

- Mother's Day
- I am interested in including all the holidays including different races and cultures.
- Easter weekend – Good Friday off and Easter Monday off.
- Adaptable to the needs of others.
- Juneteenth, Indigenous Peoples Day, Minnesota Day
- Easter, Mother Day
- All federally recognized holidays should be on the calendar, including Indigenous people day (second Monday in October – October 14, 2024)
- Election day
- Indigenous day, Eid, Jewish holidays.
- Keep what is on the current calendar.
- No.
- All state/federal holidays. Have spring break coordinate with Easter (like it does this year).
- None.
- Na
- Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, Halloween, Veterans Day, Memorial Day
- VETERANS DAY
- I would appreciate if Federal Holidays were observed appropriately with honoring the holiday by accurately informing children of the holiday and leaving 1 hour of the school day to honor the holiday like our MN state standards tell our schools to do. I appreciate that this year we have our 12 days of Christmas as no school days- would be nice if that could continue for future calendars. We have other observances that I pull my child out of school for to attend.
- Have a day off around Easter?
- No comment
- We have several students who come from Mexican families – check with them, about their Mexico holidays.
- Summer school weeks during camp seratoma please don't overlap them
- No matter to me
- Any particular 3 days of school should be off a week from school. Think about kids living very far away just to come to school for 3 days then go back home
- You did wonderful last time. Don't need to change.
- Include with Spanish/Mexico's, Jews, any other countries should be on calendar's.
- ALL HOLIDAYS.
- None at this time.
- Good Friday, Christmas
- I have had some people tell me we should have off Good Friday and the Monday after the Easter holiday.
- Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas
- Veterans Day is on a Monday next year, maybe consider this as a non-school day or teacher work day.
- Just the ones we have had for years.

- The usual holidays that we observe now. Would keep the Monday after Mother's Day as an OFF day as we've done previous years.
- Labor Day, MEA, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving/day after, Christmas, New Years Day, MLK Day, Presidents Day, Spring Break, Easter Monday, Memorial Day, July 4 (for ESY)
- If not both, either Rosh Hashanah (September) or Yom Kippur (also September). Juneteenth should be incorporated. Passover is also important (April). Acknowledging a Muslim holiday or two would also be valuable (ex. Ramadan- March-April or Eid (April)). I'd love a little more acknowledgement of different religions instead of focus only on the western religions. We don't need to have them "off" but they should be acknowledged.
- None.
- Passover
- No suggestions
- Indigenous People's Day (in place of Columbus Day)
- Ramadan, along with what was considered in this year's calendar
- Nothing in particular
- Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Easter, Mother's Day
- Christmas, New year's eve
- Halloween
- None more than current

Q5: For everyone – if you had a choice, which would you prefer...Starting earlier in August or finishing later in June? (We may have to figure this out, depending on the number of school days).

- Start earlier in August, finish in May. 45.45% (25 votes)
- Start later in August, finish in June. 16.36% (9 votes)
- Start after Labor Day, finish later in June. 16.36% (9 votes)
- Start earlier in August, finish later in June, adding more breaks throughout the year. 12.73% (7 votes)
- Other: 9.09% (5 votes)
 - Starting the same week as Faribault Public School District
 - However it works out, be done by Memorial Day instead of coming back for 3-4 days.
 - Start later august get out at the end of May and shorter breaks
 - I want to start when Faribault starts, and finish when they start. Why do you have to be different from every other school. You want you staff to show up follow the other school districts so we don't have to take off extra to be home with our own kids.
 - I like the option to start earlier in August and finish in May. One thing to consider, depending on how late we go in June there is now the Juneteenth holiday that we need to consider if staff work later may need to be paid that holiday vs. not if we start and end earlier.

Q6: For paraprofessionals and student life staff – When would you like to schedule your professional development day in December/January?

- Not applicable – I am not a paraprofessional or student life staff member. 76.36% (42 votes)

- January 17th. 10.91% (6 votes)
- January 3rd. 7.27% (4 votes)
- December 23rd. 3.64% (2 votes)
- Other: 1.82% (1 vote)
 - NA.

Q7: For everyone – any other ideas/suggestions that you'd like the committee to consider as we develop our 2024-2025 school calendar? (Note: 30 responded, 25 skipped this question)

- Having a calendar almost identical with Faribault Public Schools do help. Students tend to miss school if there's a short week. Why not just a whole week of Thanksgiving or at least a day off before Thanksgiving to give families time to travel.
- More breaks during the 2nd semester.....prevent burn out
- I highly recommend to align the schedule with the public schools in Faribault. I have a kid who is hearing and a kid who is deaf. It is frankly quite difficult to schedule days off alternatively and impact the family, especially when we are a family of color. Please align the days with the public schools.
- Good Friday and Easter Monday – long weekend for Easter. The winter programs were nicely done for both campuses this year.
- Add few more noon dismissals (ex: winter program – usually few kids left) use the 12-4 as an opportunity for trainings, teacher prep, etc
- ESY – two weeks, not three weeks
- Discontinue the two week break over the holidays and utilize those extra days either at the end of the school year that the year can end earlier or build in more longer weekend breaks.
- Reduce ESY to two weeks.
- Many of us live in the area. Perhaps look at the breaks that Faribault and Northfield have and line ours up with theirs as much as possible.
- Add more instructional days.
- NA
- No
- We have large Native American populations in MN and a history here in Faribault. It would be nice for our Native Americans to be represented at MSA as well. Observing a day for Native Americans to teach the history of there time here in Faribault and teach our Deaf, Blind, Deaf/blind students dances, song, food and culture would be a great experience for all students. It's important to include people ad our communities history to bridge people and communities together. There's so much division in the world that our children need these positive experiences.
- Shorter winter break so we can be done by Memorial Day?
- Spring should be on the 3rd week of March (during St. Patricks Day)
- Breaks try to be close to public school breaks
- Nope
- Why don't put new label/signs name of inside "PHA," MPR, FTA, etc. so parents or new students can see and find it easy.
- Suggest keeping winter breaks at a minimum to allow longer summer breaks
- Think about the staff that have students in school. Follow the Faribault school district calendar or start a day before to prepare the kids. We don't need two weeks at

Christmas. Go back to starting after Labor Day and finishing first part of June. Why do we have to be so different from the rest of the schools in the area. If you want more consistency from your staff and more support from them actually listen to what the staff are saying. And for your transparency post the responses for others to see.

- If we add any dates or move things, financial considerations for paying holidays, pay more or less unemployment for those non 12 month staff, just overall financial implications communicated and worked through with the finance director and consider additional hours charged to districts as well.
- Moving spring brake to over easter...
- Diversity and inclusion matter! :)
- Keeping spring break and the 2 week Christmas break
- Half days on Fridays or early release at least once a month to allow time for collaboration, IEP writing, evaluation writing, etc. Our staff need additional paperwork time due to being a "special education" school. Most schools do not have all of their students on IEPs. Since we do, this requires a lot of need for collaboration and paperwork and we need the time to be able to do it.
- The spring semester is often hardest on the staff. The last few years, breaks on the calendar have been really spread out/far apart during the spring. It results in burnout and more staff calling out just so that they can get a break. Please be sure to look at whether the spring semester has enough breaks here and there.
- Half day Fridays would be wonderful for those with dorm kids, it gives us those few extra hours we would love to have with them.
- Don't put too much of no school and try be same public school
- As a parent with a new student, this year's calendar aligns well with most calendars.
- Definitely keep 2 weeks for winter break. Maybe add Wednesday before Thanksgiving (or Wednesday to MEA weekend).

Important Dates:

- July 2 - Summer Program Preparation
 - July 8-25: Summer School
 - TBD: Workdays for Licensed Staff
 - TBD: Workdays for Paras/Dorm Staff
 - TBD: Student Check-In Day/Dorms Open
 - TBD: First day of School/1st Semester
 - September 4: No School - Labor Day
 - TBD: MSAD Homecoming Week*
 - TBD: MSAB Homecoming Week*
 - TBD: MSAB White Cane Day*
 - October 16: Noon Dismissal/Family-Teacher Conf.
 - October 17-18: No School - October Break
 - November 11: Veterans Day - School in session
 - November 28-29: No School - November Break
 - TBD: MSAB Winter Program*
 - TBD: MSAD Winter Program*
 - Dec. 23-Jan. 3: No School - Winter Break
 - January 3: Paras/Dorm Staff Prof. Development
 - January 20: No School - MLK Jr. Holiday
 - TBD: Final Exams - 1st Semester
 - TBD - Last day of 1st Semester
 - TBD: Workday for Licensed Staff
 - TBD: First Day of 2nd Semester
 - February 17: No School - Presidents Day
 - TBD: Noon Dismissal/Parent-Teacher Conf.
 - TBD: No School - Spring Break
 - May 26: No School - Memorial Day
 - TBD: Final Exams - 2nd Semester
 - TBD: Last Day of School/2nd Semester
- *tentative dates - subject to change

