

School Operations Committee Meeting

Monday, January 6, 2025 3:15 PM

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

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Meeting Minutes Review**
3. **Calendar Survey Results**
4. **Discuss 2025-2026 Calendar**
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 2, 2024, beginning at 3:15 PM in the Tate Hall Conference Room, 615 Olof Hanson Drive, Faribault, MN 55021.

1. Call to Order

Present: Superintendent Wilding, Annette Freiheit, John Davis, Hernan Moncada, Harold Weber, Nichelle Steffen, Brittany Thomforde, Jody Olson. Called to order at 3:21 pm.

2. Meeting Minutes Review

No comments.

3. Discuss the 2025-2026 School Year Calendar

Supt. Wilding explained that for our first meeting, we typically start with last year's calendar as a "template" to determine rough dates for common events, such as the first day of school, winter break, etc. A survey is typically then sent out to staff and families to pick from a few options. He asked the group if they had any specific questions that should be included in this year's survey. He went over the draft calendar with the committee.

Suggestions and Questions included:

- Harold asked if the school could dismiss at noon on the day before Thanksgiving to allow them travel time for Thanksgiving. John agreed, suggesting that the last day of school be moved to May 29, so that Wednesday before Thanksgiving can be off, and moving the teacher work day on June 1. Brittany supported this as well, giving staff an extra work day at the end of the school year to allow teachers to catch up and finish up with progress reports. Jody disagreed with having a two-day week for Thanksgiving, as typically more students will not show up the entire week. John agreed, if we are only seeing 20% of our students showing up for a three-day week, perhaps we should look at having the entire week off.
- Annette asked when the Board would vote on the calendar. Terry said February.
- Annette then asked about the number of school days per semester. 89 for the first semester, then 86 for the second. this may change for next year, but it will be approximately that amount.
- Annette asked if there were any quarterly reports. No. We do semester progress reports, and typically have parent-teacher conferences before MEA weekend.

- Annette asked if we started before Labor Day. Terry said yes, we are exempt from the usual practice of starting school after Labor Day.
- Annette said if we do a full week off for thanksgiving, look at adding days for the rest of the school year, which cuts into summer break. Harry said this wouldn't be a big impact, as we are open during ESY. He added that not a lot of academics happen during short weeks, with so many students out.
- Annette shared the board member perspective that it is a balance of supporting student learning and finding that sweet spot in supporting families.
- Terry: A previous concern was that many staff did not have enough vacation hours accumulated to cover Thanksgiving break and winter break. With so many breaks, our staff will be unable to build up their vacation balance.
- Annette: include those possible options with impacts in the survey. Terry shared that if the committee wants, we could add more "longer weekends" to give staff and students more breaks throughout the year as an option.
- Annette: Student education and support is our top priority. Not a lot of research available that indicates short school weeks are beneficial. John added that not having a lot of spring breaks helps staff with balloon payments. Terry shared that we've noticed a lot of staff absences during the spring, so that is something to look at.
- Annette: How many drafts will we be developing? Terry responded that it depends on the feedback received from the staff survey.
- At the January school operations committee, Terry will bring the drafts for discussion. Annette asked if we ask about what they like about the current year calendar? Terry said we can add that question and he will send out the survey in his next weekly update newsletter.

4. Adjourn

Adjourned at 3:46 pm.

2025-2026 Calendar Survey Results

73 respondents

Q1: How do you feel about half-days on the calendar (i.e., half-days on Fridays)?

- It doesn't affect me. (38 respondents – 52.05%)
- I do not like half-days – I prefer full days. (8 respondents – 10.96%)
- I am ok with a few half-days, but not too often. (27 respondents – 36.99%)

Q2: A suggestion was made to have a full-week Thanksgiving Break. An alternate suggestion was made to have a half-day break on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Both options would require adjustments to the calendar as a whole to ensure that we continue to meet state minimums. The last option would be to stay with what we've been doing (following a "Friday Schedule" on the day before the holiday). Which option would you prefer?

- Full Week Break, November 24-28. (29 respondents – 39.73%)
- School in session on November 24th and 25th; ½ day – ending at noon on Wednesday, November 26th. (30 respondents – 41.10%)
- School in session on November 24th and 25th; "Friday Schedule" – ending at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, November 26th. (14 respondents – 19.18%)

Q3: 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 (27 respondents, 36.99%)
- Start later in August, finish in June (22 respondents, 30.14%)
- Start after Labor Day, finish later in June (10 respondents, 13.7%)
- Start earlier in August, finish later in June, adding more breaks throughout the year (8 respondents, 10.96%)
- Other
 - "Start a week before labor day, finish in May, and professional day/work day once a month like other schools. More effective and completion that way for teachers and support services, I heard which makes more sense. Less burnt out for all of us."

- “I am flexible with the schedule but would prefer starting later in August or after Labor Day due to the warmer weather compared to June. At the same time, I think having a break in February could be beneficial, as it is often a challenging winter month for everyone. If an earlier start in August and a later finish in June were necessary, I would be open to it, as the benefit of receiving pay throughout the summer would help balance the extended break.”
- “Utilize the extra days built into the schedule (since we only need 165) to accommodate extra days off.”
- “I prefer starting in August and ending in May, just that I don’t want our only time off to be a couple weeks in June and that’s it because we’re going straight from ESY into the school year.”
- “Doesn’t really matter to me.”
- “It would be nice to start after Labor Day and end in May or the first week of June.”

Q4: How do you feel about having more long weekends (4-day school weeks) throughout the year?

- Love them – schedule a few long weekends scattered throughout the school year. (27 respondents – 36.99%)
- Hate them – keep our students in school for the full weeks as much as possible. (8 respondents – 10.96%)
- I am ok with a couple of long weekends during the spring semester only. (19 respondents – 26.03%)
- It doesn’t matter to me. (19 respondents – 26.03%)

Q5: What things did you like/dislike about this year’s calendar (2024-2025)?

(41 respondents out of 73)

- “Dislike that we have different spring breaks with Metro Deaf School. We have friends there that we’d love to take vacation together. Summers aren’t the same as work in session. Ever tried to contact them? Dislike three weeks ESY. Like the breaks (MEA, Thanksgiving, Christmas, MLK, Prez day, spring, Memorial Day). Dislike school in session on Monday after Easter. Need bring back returning on Monday instead of on Easter Sunday! Why take the suggestion again on a week long Thanksgiving

break? You know we all dislike it – because of smaller paychecks and by November, we finally become comfortable in our budgets.”

- “Like 2 weeks of winter break and a week of spring break. Dislike 4 workdays or staff back to work – not enough time to do the beginning of the school year checklist; unable to do online training; unable to get the materials needed for classes; everything were unprepared and last minutes; several new classes that I have never taught and do not have the curriculum – create from scratch. Dislike no work on MEA days – add IEP workdays to complete IEP, IEP meetings, etc. or add workshops, invite others to come and present a topic – ASL, mental health wellness, or others that would benefits for us; or teacher workdays because first quarter ends on the 16th and we need time to prepare materials, etc. for 2nd quarter. Dislike no break in April.”
- “1st semester ends on a short week, giving it less time to wrap up during the week especially it is only a week after returning from winter break.”
- “Not enough long weekend during spring semester. More workdays.”
- “I like the Long winter break including part of first week in Jan and the MEA weekend, dislike short Thanksgiving break or starting early in August.”
- “OK OK – Not enough Teacher Work Day. How do you expect us to be ready in such a short time, we end up spending the whole school year running on the wheel like a hamster. Please consider this very carefully and be mindful of teacher’s mental health.”
- “The school calendar does not align with the public school district’s calendar. My kids are mixed of hearing and deaf so it is a hassle to work around several different calendars. I can imagine this frustration speaks true for many families.”
- “I’d like the school to end in May.”
- “I don’t like that registration is done with no access to lockers and that it’s on a Sunday afternoon. I do like a week off for spring break.”
- “3 weeks of ESY I not think it beneficial to everyone. You keep forget about educators and they need time to recovery from school year.”
- “Half days for students to go home while staff has to stay here especially on the holiday weekends – on March 21st? I noticed not many have half days during holiday weekends.”
- “Kids having to go back on school on Easter. Terrible board decision. We were not able to celebrate with family because of this.”
- “I liked the half day prior to MEA in October. I disliked the full day prior to Thanksgiving. I dislike not having a day off in April.”

- “Spring break is really late this year, would like to stay first or second week of March. Its harder to have late spring break then all drama or sports is getting harder to back on track.”
- “Start and end dates were great.”
- “I want half day on Wednesday before Thanksgiving if not full week as well as before winter break on Friday.”
- “Dislike starting school before Labor Day. Dislike having Juneteenth in the middle of the week. Can this holiday be treated the way Veteran’s Day is; allowing employees to defer the hours to Holiday or Comp Time?”
- “I don’t like working the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. That should be off if we aren’t off all week.”
- “Like: 2 week winter break. Dislike: having school the Wed before Thanksgiving.”
- “Disliked the short Thanksgiving break. Liked the 2 week winter break. Disliked the lack of breaks throughout the spring semester.”
- “I like having a variety of breaks throughout the year including MEA and spring break but other breaks in springtime would be helpful.”
- “I liked the schedule this year.”
- “I’m not looking forward to no breaks between spring break and Memorial day. Other than that, I feel like the return from winter break and semester change is better balanced than years past.”
- “No long weekends in Spring.”
- “I dislike seeing MSAD staffs and students going stir crazy when no breaks in some specific months. Such as Feb to March spring break fall on last week. Meaning kids and staffs become restless and unhappy during winter season. I think we need to put such as Cabin Fever two days off on last week of Feb instead of have full fall break in November. We are Minnesotans, our needs are different than norm in the USA.”
- “Two week winter break in December/January – would prefer more shorter breaks scattered throughout the year.”
- “3 week summer school.”
- “*Strong dislike to 3 week summer school.”
- “It was as close to perfect as we can get.”
- “I liked that the school year ended in May. I think since Veteran’s Day was on a Monday there should have been no school and all staff took it as a holiday. Professional Development days need to clearly show who they are for and not. ESY should go back to 2 weeks instead of 3.”

- “Move ESY back to 2 weeks instead of 3 – full 5 day work week when we come back in August – add more half days on Fridays so staff have time for paperwork/IEPs, etc. – Add more long weekends.”
- “Like – Teacher Workday after 1st semester ends. Dislike – Fall break not 1 week long.”
- “No breaks between Spring Break and Memorial Day. Only 2 days off for Thanksgiving.”
- “Sports events scheduled for long holiday weekends. Doesn’t allow staff a break.”
- “No work day since Aug – not until Jan. Constantly trying to stay afloat.”
- “I really like having 2 weeks off for winter break.”
- “Liked this year’s calendar!”
- “On Wed before Thanksgiving at 2 pm while student have a long travel to go home thought noon is better.”
- “I like overall.”
- “I do not like that school starts in August. But I like the fact that they’re done in May. I like a long Christmas break.”
- “Thanksgiving break full a week.”

Q6: Any other ideas/suggestions that you’d like the committee to consider as we develop our 2025-2026 school calendar?

(31 responses out of 73)

- “More professional days/workdays. If you follow FPS winter and spring breaks, why not on those days too?”
- “Suggest to add 5 extra teacher workdays before welcome back to work for curriculum development, syllabus, prepare for new classes that on one has taught in the past and more time to finish online training, and more (beginning of the school year checklist) a week before teachers back to work 5 full workdays for staff back to school rather than 4 workdays MEA days – add IEP workdays to complete IEP, IEP meetings, etc. or add workshops, invite others to come and present a topic – ASL, mental health wellness, or others that would benefits for us; or teacher workdays because first quarter ends on the 16th and we need time to prepare materials, etc. for 2nd quarter spring break on the last week of March to first week of April add a teacher workday after the end of 3rd quarter to prepare for 4th quarter classes.”
- “If 4-days of school is being put in consideration some point, 4-days instead of 5-days of school will help tremendously for those students who participate in

extracurricular activities in missing classes when attending out-of-state events that usually has them missing 1-2 school days during the week.”

- “I would like additional teacher workdays (on Fridays if we do 4 days a week) dedicated to developing and refining classroom lessons, as well as expanding activities and opportunities aligned with the curriculum to enhance student learning experiences.”
- “1- February, April/May need 2-3 long weekends or 4-day school weeks to pace the workloads, except for March’s spring break. 2 – Graduation few days after Memorial Weekend not ideal, so move it to the first week of June? 3 – need Wednesday before Thanksgiving break for travel time and a full week Thanksgiving break is cool, too.”
- “Add more school days so we can have Teacher Workdays, a few Long Weekends, and an extra 2 days to work before the semester starts. Or start paying us for overtime. Please allow some weekend open for dorm students to stay. HIGH percent of these students don’t have fully access to ASL at home, why not let them get ASL much as they can on some weekends, that will boost many students, of course add fun activities too.”
- “If we could follow FPS with their dates for teacher working day, that would be awesome. For example, they do not have school tomorrow because of the teacher’s work day.”
- “Please check with staff about ESY. Many teachers are interested in teaching ESY but three weeks are just too long and it consumes a whole month of summer break, which is very important and much needed for staff to take care of themselves before returning to school for the full year again.”
- “4 day school days (Friday no students) other schools are finding it very successful.”
- “2 week of ESY.”
- “I would like to have couple breaks during the year but at the same time prefers to start later in August and finishes in June. Thanksgiving break one week, winter break in Feb, then in April spring break.”
- “I do not think that Winter break needs to be two full weeks. Obviously this is dependent on what day of the week the holidays land, but there is room to work with on this.”
- “Check with us in about spring break, VET day, Columbus day, MLK or anything that have vacation; double check with us first.”
- “I would like to suggest bringing back Good Friday and Easter Mondays as days off, as they used to be in the past. Adding an extra long weekend in April would provide much-needed motivation and a chance to recharge during a busy time of the year. Short weekends can often leave us feeling exhausted, so having one extended

break would help improve focus and productivity. This tradition worked well before, and I believe it could benefit students and staff now as well.”

- “Teachers need more time to prepare curriculum and gather resources. Frequent meetings often leave us feeling behind.”
- “Follow Faribault public school’s spring break.”
- “Having no school on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving – having one 2-day week shouldn’t be that big of a deal, especially considering almost all surrounding schools only go on M/T of that week. Some 3-4 days are fine, but we shouldn’t have to start that much earlier or go that much later because of them.”
- “I would think having Veteran’s day off for all would help with payroll functions and with workers as well. I would also like to see the calendar reflect summer school session as part of the 10-mo employee’s permanent schedule. Less grievances if we had it as part of their scheduled work days.”
- “Do we need more teacher workdays (with zero meetings or trainings allowed on those days) to give teachers more time to get caught up on their work (lesson plans, evaluations, IEPs, etc.)?”
- “MSA emphasis on no holidays for in school conflicted with the Thanksgivings. They have off days on those days and called it “fall break,” which we both know is not true. Why not have school day on Thanksgiving day? To show that we are not biased. If we are off on that day, then we should celebrate all the holidays such as Halloween, Valentine’s Day, etc. That is my musing.”
- “More teacher workshop days during the school year.”
- “Go back to 2 week summer school.”
- “I like half days on Fridays. Getting done at noon or not having school on Wednesday should not require calendar adjustment since a minimum of 165 contact days are required and we are at 175.”
- “Why does ending at noon on the day before thanksgiving require a change in days according to state law, being out at noon is considered a full day. It would be the same as conferences it still counts as a complete full school day.”
- “Now that our ESSER grant/COVID grant funding is done we need to reevaluate if ESY can/should be 2 weeks or 3 weeks.”
- “Consideration of a 4-day work week with more work days built in for teachers to collaborate and complete paperwork and prep on Fridays – this could also help with recruitment as families will have more time on the weekends with their children. Consider a full week break over Thanksgiving, many students don’t come that week anyways. Clarification for question 1: I like half days on Friday- and staff NEED it for

paperwork, please consider adding more of these with a telework option for most licensed staff on those days if it doesn't interrupt collaboration opportunities."

- "Look into Noon dismissals on Fridays."
- "How would half days affect full time employees?"
- "Need more ASL classes to be provided. I am sure some hearing staffs would like to take classes for that. In person or on Zoom."
- "Idea?? Once a month student can go home at noon while staff can stay till 3. Meeting, catch up in classroom, etc."
- "None at this time."