



To: Superintendent Chamberlin and School Board Members

From: Chris Sousa

Re: HSD School Board report

Date: March 31, 2011

If time is the currency of school improvement, then the Hopkinton School District Calendar Committee is the banker that secures that time. This dedicated group understands the important role that the calendar plays in our children and families' lives. Our charge is to propose a calendar that balances the needs of the Hopkinton educational community and provide the faculty, staff, and students the necessary time to collaborate on all aspects of learning. The committee, made up of teachers and parents, worked diligently to investigate, collaborate, and create the 2011-2012 school calendar, and have already started discussing the 2012-2013 calendar.

Balancing the needs of four different schools in three buildings is a challenge. The rich and diverse conversations we have around this often illustrates the need to think outside the usual constraints of time, as well as balance the varied developmental needs each school brings, with realities of contracts, holidays, traditions, and state requirements. Some of the areas that have taken center stage in our discussions are the start of the school year, holiday beginnings and endings, release days (both half and full), school vacations, and the end of the school year. The push and pull factors, such as contracts, testing schedules, CRTS, athletics, and district leadership have also weighed heavily on our decisions to innovate and be creative.

Two trains of thought guide our discussions. How can we create a calendar that is feasible and rooted in the logistics we work by, and if we had no constraints, what would a calendar look like? Rationale centers on the best time for students to learn, the "flow" of the school year, the need for collaboration, community expectations, and the varied developmental needs of the children. In an effort to gather more information two surveys were done. The information gathered from those surveys was invaluable and assisted us in making decisions for the 2011-2012 calendar, specifically around vacation and professional development days. As we begin to look to the 2012-2013 calendar these same thoughts will remain, however, the consensus to amend the starting date of the school year, examine daily start times, and to look critically at our vacation schedules, are taking center stage.

Currently we are discussing what a "dream" calendar might look like. We asked ourselves, if we could alter some of the push and pull factors and create a calendar from scratch, what would it look like? Some of the ideas we have considered are changing the beginning and ending of the year, completely changing the times we have vacations, year round schooling, earlier and later daily start times, linking professional development days

with holidays, and building a calendar around sports schedules. At this point we are still in the brainstorming phase for this dream calendar, but in creating this we hope to use what come up with, along with more survey data, as a launching point to offer up a framework that takes into consideration our push and pull factors, yet continues to build on the success we have had and offer opportunities to ensure student learning.

Putting together a calendar is a lot like having two personalities. One, creative, but not daring, wanting to stay between the lines and work within the system to make modest adjustments to increase student learning; the other, more daring, looking to make radical changes that would accommodate all aspects of student life. In the end it is a blend of the two that leads to the greatest success. We have made modest but important improvements in our calendar over the last two years and the Hopkinton School District Calendar Committee is looking forward to continuing this endeavor.

Some upcoming events (for more information please check out our calendar on our website):

April 1st & 2nd	Musical/Footloose
April 7th - 22nd	Extended School Hours
April 8th	Now a school day
April 9th	ACT Tests
April 12th	Career Expo School Wide Talent Show
April 13th	Grades close Early College Planning Night
April 14th	Juvenile Diversion Seminar 8th grade Bullying Seminar 6:30 pm Audi
April 19th	Grades Due C-Time day canceled