



Comments to the Montgomery County Board of Education Proposed 2009-2010 School Calendar November 11, 2008

Good Morning, my name is Kay Romero and I represent the Montgomery County Council of PTAs. The single most important calendar issue for our members is the start of the school year. Many parents would like school to begin after Labor Day. Absent that change, we heard by a 9 to 1 margin that members (including teachers) prefer school to start on the Tuesday before Labor Day so the elementary open houses can be held on Monday.

Our members raised two additional issues which are not addressed. The first is the concern that concentrating professional days on Mondays and Fridays in conjunction with the holidays traditionally observed on Mondays results in students attending classes on many fewer Mondays than other days of the week. MCCPTA members do want professional days attached to weekends. We would also like MCPS to make a more systemic effort to ensure that students who receive instruction in specific courses, whether they are the standard elementary specials or Speech/Language therapy, PT, OT, or any other subject are not shortchanged if Monday is their regular day of instruction.

Many principals make significant efforts to change schedules to equalize access to instruction across the days of the week. Many of these services are provided by itinerant teachers who cannot change their schedules without affecting other schools. We urge MCPS to look at the methods that other educational institutions use to equalize instruction across the days of the week for comparison.

Parents whose families observe religions other than Judaism and Christianity have raised concerns regarding student absences on their respective religious holidays. We understand that a memo and calendar is sent to schools on an annual basis to raise awareness of other religious holidays and to help teachers to accommodate these holidays for the affected students. We suggest that this memo be released to parents each year.

MCCPTA thanks MCPS very much for the chance to provide input during the calendar planning process. We look forward to working with you on the calendar in future years.

Kay Romero
MCCPTA President