



***For release the week of: December 19, 2019 (or as soon as practical)
For questions, please contact: Tammy Woller, 715-536-4581, ext. 10002***

Superintendent's Corner...

The week prior to the holiday season was filled with student performances and excitement. It is also a reminder that giving is more rewarding than receiving. Throughout the district, teachers, administrators and students stepped forward to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate.

Welcoming 2020 - The Hard Work Continues

Not long ago, we celebrated most of the results of our State Report Card which addressed our student achievement from last year. The celebration was brief, as we can do so much better. The district is working on our Strategic Plan which focuses on improving our student achievement as we continue to enhance community partnership, student/staff wellness and remain fiscally responsible.

One component of improving student performance is the development of the 2020-2021 school calendar. Three stakeholder groups were surveyed: parents, staff and students in Grades 5 through 11. Below are the results of the surveys and how they may (or may not) influence next year's school calendar.

Adding Daily Minutes

All three groups favored adding up to 30 minutes to the instructional day; parents by 67%, staff by 73% and students by 67.8%. **Result:** Next year's calendar will reflect up to 30 minutes added to each instructional day.

Thanksgiving Break

Parents and staff were overwhelming not in favor of a full week off for Thanksgiving, while 63.6% of students were in favor of having the full week off. **Result:** Sorry, students. Next year's calendar will have two days of school (Monday and Tuesday) during the week of Thanksgiving.

Spring Break

All three surveys favored maintaining one full week off for Spring Break. Aligning our week off for Spring Break to area school districts were almost split for all three surveys. **Result:** We will have one full week off for Spring Break during the week beginning March 29, 2021. Three additional survey questions were asked in the staff survey for topics relating to their professional duties.

Parent/Teacher Conferences Compensated Days

When surveyed, 51.6% of the staff were in favor of eliminating the time off for participating in Parent/Teacher conferences. **Result:** There will be no additional days off tied to Parent/Teacher

Conferences but the conference schedule will be streamlined to improve the process and be more inclusive to our parents working non-traditional shifts.

Merrill School Improvement (MSI) Days at the Beginning of the Year
 MSI Days are the professional development opportunities we schedule throughout the school year. When asked if these opportunities should take place at the beginning of the year, 67.9% of the staff agreed. **Result:** Most of the thirteen MSI days will take place prior to the students first day. This results in two MSI days taking place during the students' instructional calendar.

Time for Grading During the School Day
 When staff were asked to replace grading time with student instructional time, 43.3% agreed. **Result:** Grading will not take place during normal school hours but the grading process and procedure, especially at the elementary level, will be revised to be more streamlined/improved.

Other features of this calendar include:

- Nine inclement weather days built into the school year, practically eliminating the need to consider student make up days added to the end of the calendar.
- Last day for students will be May 27, 2021, one day before Merrill High School's graduation.
- Only two Merrill School Improvement (MSI) Days, the days we provide professional development, between the students' first and last day of school.

While the calendar is Board approved, we still have much to do to strategically maximize the instruction our students receive. We are also anxious to revise our Parent/Teacher Conferences to be more parent-friendly. Tackling our elementary grading process is a revision that is long overdue in order to accurately reflect the progress of our students and to make the process less burdensome for our teachers.

The calendar is simply one means of improving our student achievement district-wide. MAPS staff is dedicated to improving every student's educational experience and take our district-wide achievement to higher levels. (The calendar is located here on our website:

<https://www.mapsedu.org/district/school-calendar.cfm>)

Merrill Area Public Schools
2020-2021
Academic Year Calendar
 Board Approved 12-18-2019

WEATHER RELATED SCHOOL CLOSURES
 When making the determination to cancel school due to weather emergencies, we will always take every reasonable effort to make thoughtful and timely decisions in the interest of student safety. Each event has unique circumstances and at times will allow for more notice than others.
 If the National Weather Service issues a wind chill or cold temperature warning, school and school related events will be cancelled.
 If the National Weather Service issues a snow or freezing rain advisory or warning, school officials with the assistance of local meteorologists, transportation services, state patrol, and county highway department will make a determination as to whether or not road conditions pose a substantial risk for travel.
 Decisions to cancel school or conduct a late start regarding snow and freezing rain advisories and warnings will generally happen prior to 6:00 AM the day of school. We understand that this may be challenging for some families; however, storms are not as predictable as temperature.
 Early releases will be decided by no later than 10:15 AM and parent notification will occur shortly after the decision is made.
 Please remember that we are dealing with natural forces that we do not always predictable. We will take every precaution to make the best decision we can with the information that is available to us. At times this may include keeping students at school instead of issuing an early release for the purpose of allowing road crews time to clear roads.
 Any revisions of this calendar requires Board approval prior to implementation.

John Sample
 Proud Superintendent