

## **Uniform Regional School Calendar Taskforce December 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting Minutes**

Doreen Marvin convened the meeting at 2:05pm.

Doreen recapped the last meeting – presentation from two of the RESC's – who talked about challenges and successes from their existing regional calendars. Later, members broke into groups to discuss various topics and reconvene to discuss. She also spoke to the domino effect that would be created especially linked to transportation when putting a uniform calendar into effect.

Mason Thrall (director of transportation of CREC) & Leslie Sheldon (president of school transportation association) made a presentation. CREC provides transportation for SDE's RESCO as part of the sheff agreement. Currently, they are transporting 12,000+ students and contracting over 700 vehicles from 6 different bus companies to 183 schools. This year their buses will travel over 12 million miles. Last year, the SDE spent \$200,000 on additional transportation because of calendar differences and a uniform school calendar would save this money. Towns that have more students outplaced will save more money through the common calendar. Mason talked about tiered vs shared; tiered is when a vehicle goes out and does more than one trip; a shared group would be students going to different schools riding on the same bus.

Mason opened up the floor for questions. Rep Aman asked the first question but did not turn on his microphone. Mason responded to them that "it's not the Christmas vacation – those are pretty standard". Typically the February and April vacations can differ. Hartford does a week in March instead of a February and April vacation.

There were no other questions.

Doreen Marvin and Rep Demicco made a presentation on a summary of ideas for possible guidelines as a result of previous meetings. They touched on their notes from the previous meeting. They talked extending implementation guidelines. Charlie Jaskiewicz had previously stated an extension of implementation would be necessary partly because of teacher contracts. Also, those contracts sometimes have specific dates for vacations and that would need to be taken into account. Transportation contracts would also need to be looked at. It was determined that we cannot have an end date other than June 30<sup>th</sup> due to snow days and individual district policies. Some districts go beyond 180 days.

Another piece was Cultural and Religious Observances within a specific community or region are of concern and there needs to be flexibility and sensibility with respect to a location. There are also unanticipated circumstances – school construction; school maintenance – would have to extend or change a vacation within a year. SDE can also consider digital opportunities for a consistent professional development message.

Next, Doreen spoke about guidelines within each region – the charge is 180 days, 2 PD days, 3 vacation times, start days, end days, and one vacation as outlined in the guidelines has to be

during the summer. Five days during the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> week of December which can coincide with new year's day should also be included in the report. Also, at least 5 days in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April should be included – some districts do March instead of April but small groups decided April works. February break was discussed and members agreed to work towards common agreement on February. It was also recommended that Election Day be a professional development day. One other common PD day that doesn't interfere with statewide student assessments was another point brought up in the previous meeting.

Afterwards, the chairs asked that members break into smaller groups and then re-convene to go over notes. They asked that one RESC person be in each small group, and someone also record notes.

Rep. Demicco called the meeting back to order 15 minutes later.

Patrice McCarthy was in the first group. They were supportive of postponing the implementation date in order for it to run smoother. They also noted that MLK day is to be decided locally. They are curious as to where the savings will go but it's up to municipal issues and whether this will cause a reduction in state grants. She also noted that some school districts extend beyond the normal 180 days and this would cause issues with conformity in start and end dates.

Rep. Aman was in the second group and they were concerned about the length of time that students would be on the bus vs the amount of savings a municipality would have. He noted that we are only talking about \$3000-\$5000 in savings for some towns and this is not enough for a superintendent to upset so many parents. They touched on PD days and large group sessions vs the current model of very small groups in a classroom in their own school. They concluded that towns can do whatever they want and writing legislation to force them to do things would have unintended consequences. Craig Edmondson also talked about election day and issues concerning security and asked that it be taken into consideration.

Charlie Jaskiewicz was in the third group. He doesn't believe the implementation date should not be pushed past the 2016-2017 school year unless there were contractual issues. They had some other discussions with regards to opening/closing dates. In order for vo-tech schools to work within this calendar, if there is no collaboration with the same days off, there will be consequences. If everyone isn't on the same schedule, it will be difficult to get the vo-tech schools included. He echoed Rep Aman's comments that the calculated savings isn't enough. There was also a discussion about February vacation and there needs to be continuity for that schedule.

Dani Thibodeau's representative was in the fourth group and they talked about April vacation and the consideration for the newer testing schedules and believes these windows are going to be much longer and this could land in the middle of one of those windows. They were also worried about special ed out-placement. There were also some questions about the one week off in the summer – why is that necessary? They believe there needs to be flexibility in each category the taskforce is addressing. Rep Demicco responded that the issue about the summertime is in the legislation so there is no way around that.

Doreen Marvin had a question about February vacation – at the last meeting it was talked about agreement within a region as districts are all over the place. Instead of identifying a specific time frame, would it work within a region? Rep Ritter answered that this is good but it will continue to be a problem with vo-tech schools as talked about earlier by Charlie Jaskiewicz.

Craig Edmondson thinks there can be some economy of scale regarding transportation but doesn't believe there will be any significant savings by implementing this uniform calendar. He touched on regional transportation contracts and asked for other members' opinions on this.

Gary Peluchette talked about changing start and stop times within a district and mentioned they had done this in Bridgeport and saved \$200,000.

Charlie Jaskiewicz agreed that start and stop times for days do need to be looked at but also start and end dates are important. He is also curious to find out what other states do and he asked OLR to research that for the next meeting. He is looking for other models that may help identify answers to the taskforce's questions.

Doreen Marvin asked if anyone else had any questions and they did not. She talked about adding all of these notes and suggestions to the report. Something she keeps hearing is flexibility in different categories.

Craig Edmondson also pointed out that contracts are currently being negotiated with three years out and recommended a waiver process for an implementation delay. While some districts can do all this by 2016-2017, other districts may need to wait longer.

There was also a point about which pieces can be done statewide vs which pieces can be done regionally. It is believed this will help with questions of flexibility.

The chairs scheduled the next meeting for December 16<sup>th</sup> at 2pm and adjourned the meeting at 3:07pm.