

CAPE ELIZABETH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

Cape Elizabeth, Maine

To: C.E. School Board

From: Meredith Nadeau

Date: February 10, 2012

Re: SY 13 Academic Year Calendar

The idea for a March vacation came from staff and was based on a rationale for educational continuity. As it appeared that no feedback had been obtained from the community about such a calendar proposal, I felt it was important to ask the question.

We received 215 responses to the survey, and, of those expressing a preference for one calendar over the other, the results were literally a 50-50 split. There were 91 respondents who expressed a clear preference for the current calendar model, and 91 respondents who expressed a preference for the proposal which had a vacation in March. Another 22 responses, could be represented as expressing a slight preference for one proposal over the other with 11 of those falling in favor of the current model and 11 falling on the side of the March calendar.

Comments favoring the March vacation focused on the following:

- it would be easier for families to travel: more time to allow overseas or cross-continent travel, better travel deals, students would be less likely to miss school when families opted to leave early for or return late from February or April vacations due to the deals offered if traveling M-W
- it would be between seasons for student-athletes who participate in winter or spring sports
- it would provide longer stretches of time and continuity for learning
- the final days before Feb and April vacations may not be conducive to learning; one fewer vacation would provide one less disruption
- March is a good time to schedule college visits for high schoolers
- having one vacation would make it easier for working parents to coordinate supervision of their children if they were unable to take a vacation themselves
- the March break would coincide with college students returning home
- the earlier vacation might prevent the learner mindset of things slowing down after April break
- fewer transitions and disruptions to the routine of school; could be

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- beneficial to some students with educational disabilities
- the current calendar model is outdated
- would be more consistent with the rest of the country

Comments favoring the current calendar model discussed these points:

- current calendar is consistent with the rest of New England; allows greater time with family and friends
- child care impact for working parents and staff
- illnesses seem to peak in February
- risk of educational fatigue--students (and staff) need time to rejuvenate
- lost opportunities to enjoy ME in different seasons (winter activities in February and nicer weather in April)
- greater continuity in the spring doesn't solve the problems of a choppy fall; continuity a myth
- support ME businesses including the ski industry
- longer period between breaks would be too much for elem. aged students
- impact for children of divorced parents who alternate having their children during the vacation weeks
- hs athletic playoffs occur during the Feb. break
- more student would be absent due to illness
- students would not be able to participate in outside activities (e.g. Scouts) which meet during breaks
- possible heat savings if closed in Feb. vs. March
- more opportunities for struggling students to catch up during the vacations
- impact for middle school athletics
- impact for drama festival

Other questions and concerns were expressed about whether or not there would be child care and/or day camp opportunities provided to children, and, from a large number of respondents, whether or not other districts would do the same.

While the 50-50 split in feedback warrants future consideration, at this time we, as part of the Portland Area Technical High School (PATHS) region have a statutory obligation to have "not more than 9 dissimilar instructional days" between the calendars of schools in the region. I intend to share the summary of feedback with districts in the region who are part of the PATHS sending schools for further discussion and consideration for future calendar years.