

February 7, 2023

Dear Lake and Peninsula School Board and Superintendent Luke,

I do not support the subsistence calendar for the following reasons:

REASON #1- COVID CLOSURES AND ILLNESSES

Our students have missed so many days of school because of COVID closures and COVID illnesses. From March 2020 until present, our site has had 50 closure days and zero of these have been made up.

Forced closure days

2019/2020 30 days (school district closure)

2020/2021 0 days

2021/2022 20 days (Newhalen City mandates)

Total 50 days out of 450 school days

Now that things are back to “normal” students should have the opportunity to make up and catch up on these missed days.

In addition to the forced closures most of the student population has become ill with COVID one or more times resulting in missing a minimum of 14 additional days.

With this factor alone, students have theoretically attended school for only 85.78% of the past three school years, resulting in missing out on over 14% of their learning opportunities.

REASON #2- NO SUMMER SCHOOL OFFERED

For students who are not able to get their levels completed in the 150 student days, summer school has not been an option to make up and get caught up on these learning levels. For schools that have had missed days, summer school should be a top priority to help students get caught up and excel at what they have missed.

REASON #3- DISTRICT APPROVED TIME OFF

There are 150 student contact days on the school calendar. In reality, very few students really get their teacher all 150 days for a variety of reasons.

Per the teacher contract, they are granted 6 days of sick leave and 5 days of personal leave.

150 Student Contact Days

- 6 sick days
- 5 personal leave days

= 11 days out of 150 or only 139 student contact, a loss of 7%

As an incentive to encourage instructional staff members to conduct their personal business during the summer months, or during other non duty days, and keep teachers in their classrooms as many days as possible during the school year; the District has already approved to annually pay each teacher \$150.00 for each day of unused personal leave. People get sick and have to travel for personal reasons. Things come up and teachers need to take time off for illness or other reasons.

REASON #4- ADDITIONAL DISTRICT APPROVED TIME OFF

I love how passionate and involved a lot of our teachers are! It is great for the kids, community, and the teachers themselves. However, it is not great for the students whose teachers leave them to travel for events. This year, cross country took the teacher/coach out of the classroom for 3 days. Volleyball took the teacher/coach out of the classroom for 7 days. Basketball is taking a teacher/coach out of the classroom for 9-12 days depending on the school site.

150 Student Contact Days

- Cross Country: 3 days
- Volleyball: 7 days
- Basketball: 9-12 days
- SNAP Meet: 4-5 days

Additionally, there are other district sanctioned activities and trainings that take teachers out of the classrooms such as AASG (4 days out of class), RTI (2 days out of class), early October in-service sessions (2 extra days in addition to the regular 5 in service days), teachers leaving early for Christmas vacation, ASTE technology conference (3 days), SPED conference (4 days), SNAP Meet (4 or 5 days), NEA Conference (3 days) and more. If the teacher is the LPEA association president for the school district, they are granted leave of 10 days of Association (5 additional days in contract negotiation year).

REASON #5: PARENT SCHEDULES

Parents' work schedules are not the same as school schedules. Depending on where the parent works, they may not be able to travel in the summer and can only take time off from their employer in the fall, winter, or spring to spend time out of the village on vacation or for special events such as to see family, for weddings, etc.

REASON #6: STUDENT HEALTH APPOINTMENTS OUT OF THE VILLAGE

Students need to go to Anchorage and Dillingham for specialized health appointments such as dental, allergy tests, etc. Rarely the appointments are available during school calendar already scheduled vacation or in-service days. Including travel, students will miss up to 3 days of school for just one appointment and even more days if they have multiple appointments and can be out for the entire week.

REASON #7: SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

LPSD SCHOOL YEAR VS. SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

With 4 months off of school, summer learning loss is a real thing and not only affects students but also affects staff. Staff has to reteach things to their students so that they can begin their next levels. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. I feel like the above picture is an accurate reflection for summer learning loss.

REASON #8: SIX YEARS WITH THE SUBSISTENCE CALENDAR + COVID

Comments have been made that students are still graduating even while utilizing the Subsistence Calendar. Yes, these upper class are graduating, but what about the 5th graders and younger? They have had 170 school days taken away from them during their critical learning years of reading, writing, etc. How are their test scores? Are they able to read and write at the appropriate levels? Additionally these same 5th graders have been through the COVID closures.

2022-2023 5th grade- 20 days (on Subsistence calendar)

2021-2022 4th grade- 20 days (on Subsistence calendar) + 20 days (COVID closures)

2020-2021 3rd grade- 20 days (on Subsistence calendar)

2019-2020 2nd grade- 20 days (on Subsistence calendar) + 30 days (COVID closures)
2018-2019 1st grade -20 days (on Subsistence calendar)
2017-2018 Kindergarten -20 days (on Subsistence calendar)

This adds up to them missing out on one entire school year (170 days).

REASON #9- LEARNING NEW HABITS

To learn a new habit, studies show that it takes 66 days. That is a whole semester of our school year with their teacher (assuming neither party misses any days).

FINAL NOTES

The point is, that it all adds up. If our goal as a district is to have 130 student contact days directly with a highly qualified teacher, then we should keep the subsistence calendar. If our goal is to have 150 student contact days, we need to increase the amount of student days to 160 but preferably 170 like the majority of 54 school districts do in the state of Alaska.

Quyana/Chin'an/Quyanaa for the opportunity to express my opinions/observations.

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