

WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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December 2, 2014

Re: **Balanced Calendar**

Dear Parents and Guardians of Western School District,

Western School District, as part of Jackson County's Connected Community Schools, is preparing to support and lead a countywide discussion around the consideration of a new school-year schedule, also known as a "balanced calendar." As you may have already heard, and to keep in mind as you receive additional information during the coming weeks, no decision has yet been made. We look forward to working with our parents, teachers, students, and community members to further explore this alternative school-year concept, with options for participation described below. Your thoughtful participation in this coming process will shape our decisions on possible next steps.

As this investigation begins, you may be wondering exactly what constitutes a "balanced calendar." A balanced calendar can take many forms, but generally, it is one that more evenly distributes the days students are currently attending school (approximately 180) across the 12 months of the year. It is not "year-round school," which implies more school days added to the calendar.

As each of your Connected Community Schools are fully committed to providing the greatest opportunity for the success of all students, our primary motivation behind this investigation is to better understand the opportunities and options for creating learning environments that will foster the highest levels of student achievement.

There will be many opportunities for your feedback and participation in these conversations. Panel Discussions will be held in each local school district in February 2015. Western will host a panel discussion on Monday, February 23rd at 6:30 p.m. in the Western Community Arts Center. This will provide all who are interested with the chance to learn more about the possibilities within a balanced calendar as well as the opportunity to discuss and share their thoughts.

A formal, countywide phone survey will be conducted in March 2015, during which it is hoped that participants will share honest and constructive information, which will help us to learn the feasibility of this option for Western and other Jackson County schools. If you are contacted for this survey, please consider taking the few moments to provide us with your responses.

Finally, we will have an open survey and feedback portal, available mid-winter 2015, with a link posted to our district website. We encourage all parents, staff, and community members to complete this survey.

In the spring of 2015, upon the collection and analysis of all information, all Connected Community Schools superintendents will work together to understand the impressions and impact of the community, and determine possible next steps. At that point, feedback could generate new conversations, or the data could bring light to the fact that now may not be the best time to make this change.

Throughout the process, updated information will be available on the Jackson County ISD website, and we encourage you to visit www.jcisd.org for the latest data and answers to common questions.

On behalf of Western and Jackson County's Connected Community Schools, we are excited to begin this process with our local education communities!

Sincerely,



Michael Smajda
Superintendent