



January 20, 2010

Dear Parents and Community Members,

First, I would like to thank so many of you for your kind comments regarding my appointment as the Deputy Commissioner of Education. I won't be leaving until June, but I will greatly miss this District and all of our students, staff, and parents. I have truly enjoyed my time here as it has been a pleasure serving this community.

Next, in our quest to find a calendar that everyone is comfortable with, we have put together another draft :)! This calendar can be seen from the link on our website at www.aspenk12.net.

The big issue has become the completion of the semester for high school which has occurred for the last five years in December. Both the middle school and elementary school have always ended their semester in January and would like to continue to do so. The high school staff would like to move their semester end date to January, as well. They feel very strongly that students are hurried through the ending of the first semester and miss valuable content due to the difference in the number of days from the first semester to the second when it ends in December. They definitely feel that it is an educational issue that greatly impacts what occurs in each class, especially for one semester courses. They would like to see us do everything we can to make both semesters as even as possible while honoring the communities desire to start later in August. The strong feedback from students and some parents was shared with staff, but they feel current high school students have never experienced the semester ending in January. Therefore, students do not fully understand how the pace and tension of the December days can be replaced by a much more effectively timed summary of the semester with finals beginning the second week in January. We know that some of our students may not like this new draft, but we would like to give it a try and then talk to students next January for their perspectives. Staff feels this is much more conducive to student success. The college counseling office also discussed the impact of college application due dates on the hurried feel of December. Many seniors expressed a concern about the difficulty of completing their applications at the same time they were doing finals. Staff has agreed to not give any assignments, long or short term, that would be completed during the holiday break and due at the conclusion of the break. This should honor the students' desire to have a worry free vacation. One of the concerns in the past was related to term papers and other types of assignments that were due the first day back. Ending the high school semester in January would also allow us to align the semester end dates for all three schools, which would help us greatly with the teacher work day on January 14 being effective for all staff.

We have also moved Spring Break later in March by one week from previous years, to allow us to complete all state testing before the break. It also aligns us with the Roaring Fork School District's break.

This calendar will be presented to the Board of Education on Monday, Jan. 25th as a draft. Please look this over and send me any feedback you may have.

Thank you,

Diana