



WESTBY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Westby Area High School 634-3101
Westby Area Middle School 634-0200

Westby Elementary School 634-0500
Coon Valley Elementary School 452-3143

WHEREAS, the primary purpose of Wisconsin public schools is to provide a sound, well-rounded education that will prepare Wisconsin's children for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally; and

WHEREAS, the policies and goals of the state should serve to foster a strong public education system; and

WHEREAS, the setting of the school calendar is a matter of educational policy and has ramifications on curriculum and student programs, student success and absenteeism; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has statutorily mandated that public school boards may not start their school term prior to September 1 of each year pursuant to section 118.045, Wis. Statutes; and

WHEREAS, a school board may commence its school term prior to September 1 only for "extraordinary reasons" and only if it submits a written request to the Department of Public Instruction asking for an earlier start date and detailing the "extraordinary reasons" for the earlier start date request; and

WHEREAS, the September 1 start date mandate was enacted without due consideration of its effect on students' educational interest, student achievement or student learning; and

WHEREAS, local communities know what is best for their own local school calendars; and

WHEREAS, the September 1 school start date mandate has deprived school boards of local control in determining the school calendar and has interfered with the ability of school boards to set school calendars that best serve their students and their local communities; and

WHEREAS, the September 1 school start date mandate has resulted in Wisconsin students being at a disadvantage when taking national and international tests alongside students not subject to a September 1 start date mandate; and

WHEREAS, local control over the start date would allow for additional days of instruction for students prior to state and local assessments, and additional preparation for the ACT and Advanced Placement exams; and

WHEREAS, local control over the school start date will allow school district staff to participate in professional development coursework throughout the course of the school year, which is better

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aligned with best practices for adults learning; and better align the school calendar with the co-curricular schedule for high school students that begins in early August; and

WHEREAS, the September 1 school start date mandate has resulted in school terms ending in mid-to late June, creating problems for students, families, teachers and school officials and placing high school students seeking summer employment at a competitive disadvantage in comparison to college students whose school year often ends in mid-May; and

WHEREAS, local control over the school start date will allow school boards and school districts to better meet the needs of students to have breaks throughout the school years, to align with best practices for student learning, to decrease the rate of absences and illnesses, and to allow for an increase in the amount of time spent with family over the winter holidays; and

WHEREAS, the September 1 school start date mandate has not improved academic programming or enhanced educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin should be promoting more time on task and other educational reforms necessary to ensure that every child is prepared for the global economy rather than hindering school boards' efforts set a school calendar that fosters growth and improvement; and

WHEREAS, independent charter schools and private schools that accept voucher students and receive taxpayer dollars from the State of Wisconsin retain complete flexibility to start their school term prior to September 1; and

WHEREAS, The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) Delegate Assembly formally adopted a resolution stating that "The WASB supports repealing existing state statutes restricting the school start date"; and

WHEREAS, THE 2017 Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) Delegate Assembly formally adopted a resolution stating that "The WASB supports legislation to allow all school districts to begin their school terms before September 1."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Westby Area Schools Board of Education calls on Gov. Walker, Sen. Jennifer Shilling and Rep. Lee Nerison to eliminate the September 1 school start date mandate and allow local school boards to set their calendars in the best interests of their students and communities.

Dated: April 10, 2017


David Eggen, Board President


Robert Kerska, Clerk