

Resolution - Section 1248b of the Revised School Code – Balanced School Year (BSY) Waiver

Historical Aspects

In March 2013, approximately ten Madison School District faculty and staff traveled to Croswell-Lexington (Cos-Lex) Community Schools near Port Huron. The intent of the trip was to explore implementation of 1:1 technology occurring within the Cros-Lex Community Schools. At that time, Dr. Kevin Miller was the Superintendent of Cros-Lex and I served as Assistant Superintendent at Madison. At one point throughout the conversation regarding 1:1 technology, Dr. Miller mentioned year-round education and the district's strategic plan to implement a Balanced School Year (BSY) program. Upon returning to Madison conversations occurred between administration, the Madison Board of Education, and the entire elementary faculty and staff to determine if a BSY program would be feasible at Madison.

Elementary faculty volunteered to serve on one of three committees as part of the research and development process. Information was gathered and presented at two parent meetings held in January 2014. A subsequent survey was administered to parents to indicate if they were interested and/or had additional questions. Following continued conversations regarding the level of parent commitment, a recommendation to offer a BSY program was made to the Board at the March 17, 2014 Madison Board of Education meeting. Following the Board's approval, the District submitted an application to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for a waiver to start school prior to Labor Day. The waiver was approved March 20th.

Throughout the remainder of the spring and summer the Madison School District developed and carried out a plan to offer a Balanced School Year (BSY) program. This included an aligned calendar as an educational opportunity available to parents and their children, if they chose to participate. The reason for establishing such a calendar was to minimize learning loss during a typical three-month summer vacation, thus providing more continuous learning. In addition, the calendar would allow for shorter and more frequent breaks throughout the year. We felt this would allow students and staff the opportunity to relax, reflect, and rejuvenate. We stated that the BSY students would receive the same rigorous instruction, resources, and services as the students on the traditional calendar, including administration, instructional staff, support staff, special education services, Title I services, specials classes, and technology. It was our belief that this opportunity would benefit students, reducing attendance and behavior issues, and would improve academic performance.

The Michigan Department of Education offered a grant opportunity through Section 31B - Year-Round Grant Funding. Madison School District was successful with this application and was subsequently awarded \$333,765.00.

The funding offered an opportunity to accomplish the following:

- 103,645.00 Labor and material for a Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) addition to the Madison Elementary School cafeteria and music rooms
- \$137,200.00 Replacement of a Roof Top Unit (RTU) above the elementary school
- \$92,920.00 Purchase of a new school bus

Madison met its obligation to the state at the end of the 2016-17 school year. At that time, the district had maintained a Year-Round Calendar (Balanced School Year program) for three years, 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17.

Evaluation Aspects

After almost 2.5 years of offering the BSY option and nearing the three year obligation to the state, our faculty and families provided feedback about the advantages and disadvantages. Those who participated in the program expressed that the number one advantage is that the program presents a "happiness factor". The periodic breaks reduced stress and allowed the opportunity for everyone to regroup. Teachers and families believed students experienced less learning loss during the summer months. In addition, the tuition-based Academic Enrichment Opportunities (AEOs) offered during breaks provided students with the opportunity to visit many great locations.

Now, over the course of almost 4.5 years we recognize that Madison Elementary School has faced some challenges due to the operation of a Balanced School Year program, essentially a school within a school. There have been challenges related to scheduling, bussing, lunch, early dismissals, conferences, and professional development. Shared staffing such as the District Health Care Professional, Title I staff, itinerant staff, cafeteria, transportation, playground supervisors, literacy coach, secretarial staff, specials teachers, school counselor, and assistant principal are, at times, a challenge as well.

Over the course of 4.5 years we have monitored student progress and achievement data. Similar to the review of data after 2.5 years, we have seen no significant difference between the two programs.

Furthermore, it was anticipated that interest and subsequent enrollment in the BSY program would grow. However, the overall student population enrolled in the BSY program (1 of 2 Y5s sections is BSY and 2 of 6 K – 5th grade classes at each grade level are BSY) has remained consistent rather than grow throughout the five school years.

The three most substantial challenges are:

1. **The inequity in the placement of students** in classrooms, including class size, behavior, and academic performance across all classes within each respective grade level.
 - a. This year there are class sizes of 18 or 19 in one program versus class sizes of 22 or 23 with the other. In addition, balancing demographics of the overall population of one program with the other was not able to occur with at least two particular grade levels this school year.
2. **Ineffectiveness of implementing processes** such as administering the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and 3rd Grade Reading legislation requirements.
3. The **opportunity cost** to offer available enrollment to students.
 - a. Additional resources such as special education support, bussing, and operational costs total approximately \$15,000. However, there is also opportunity cost to be gained by offering a succinct method in which to reach enrollment limits through SOC process for each respective grade. Madison has lost potential SOC students due to operating the BSY program. This year for

instance, there was potential to receive over \$300,000 in additional funding if one student was added to each class at the elementary.

Summary

Our hope was that there would not be a significant difference in the educational opportunities with students enrolled in BSY and TSY. We wanted everyone to perform at a high level. After reviewing the academic, behavioral, and attendance data since implementing the BSY calendar it is evident that neither the BSY nor TSY calendar had an advantage. The bottom line is that, despite the happiness and satisfaction with the calendar provided to the BSY teachers and students, the BSY schedule did not result in significantly improved academic performance, student behavior, or student attendance compared to those students on the TSY calendar. Unfortunately, what we have learned is that operating a school within a school has placed a significant strain on resources for all staff and students and has prevented us from providing all students the most equitable educational experience possible. To continue the BSY calendar with the data and knowledge we have would be a disservice to our entire Madison Community.

Technical Aspects

Section 1284b of the Revised School Code (MCL 380.1284b) prohibits public schools in Michigan from starting school prior to Labor Day. Madison School District has twice applied and been granted a waiver by the State Superintendent to begin school prior to Labor Day. This occurred for the first time when the Board of Education approved application of a waiver to start the BSY program and then again to align with established BSY school calendars through this 2018-19 school year.

Based on 1) The inequity in the placement of students in classrooms, including class size, behavior, and academic performance across all classes within each respective grade level, 2) Ineffectiveness of implementing processes, and 3) The opportunity cost to offer available enrollment to students, it was recommended that the District not apply to the Michigan Superintendent for a pre-Labor Day start waiver for the 2019-20 school year and that the District return to a traditional school year calendar for all students beginning with the 2019-20 school year and continuing thereafter. The Board approved the Resolution as presented.