

December 13, 2022

Dr. Jill Underly, State Superintendent
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
PO Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841

Dear Dr. Underly,

On behalf of the Board of Education I am requesting the School District of River Valley be allowed to have an earlier start date of the 2023-24 school year to provide for the mental health support of our students and staff within the School District of River Valley as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Allowing for the earlier start time, not only meets the desires of our families, staff, and students (as demonstrated through survey results) it also allows the District to provide a more natural and meaningful mental health break for our students and staff at the midpoint of the school year around the holiday season (already a stressful time for families). By allowing the District to start on August 23, 2023, this allows for the end of the semester to fall prior to the December holiday break. This allows students (and families) to have a true holiday break versus spending time studying over this break for upcoming end of the semester projects and exams, which adds stress to students and families. This calendar also provides a clear break for our staff, as they are not working over this break finalizing plans for the last few weeks of the semester and answering student and family communication about ongoing projects and assignments. In addition, with this proposed calendar, the District would plan to build in a work day at the end of the holiday break for staff, giving them the resources they need to take an actual break (and supporting their mental health) and allow them to come back more refreshed and reinvigorated to meet the needs of our students. Our students and staff have been under tremendous pressure and strain due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This would be one more way our District wants to support the mental health needs of our students, families, and staff.

We regret that we did not ask for this earlier start time to the 2022-23 school year as our students and staff continue to feel the stress and burden that comes with trying to recover from a global pandemic. We have learned that these stressors are not quickly dissipating and will continue to be there for our students and staff for the next couple of years.

Enclosed with this letter requesting an early start date is a copy of the official posting for the December 12, 2022, Board of Education meeting, the minutes of that meeting where the Board took official action to request a start date waiver, and the resolution that was passed requesting to commence the school term early. **We do request that DPI act on this request as soon as possible so we can get a calendar out to our families as soon as possible.**

The Board has prepared and adopted a tentative 2023-24 school year calendar that would start school on the date of August 23, 2023, pending approval of this request.

The District response to the needs of our students, staff, and families necessitates the need to request this early start date for the 2023-24 school year.

Thank you for your consideration of this request on behalf of the Board of Education, staff, and students of the School District of River Valley.

Sincerely,

Kathy Jennings, Board of Education President
School District of River Valley

cc: Board of Education

Enclosures: 12/12/22 Board Meeting Posting
12/12/22 Board Meeting Minutes
12/12/22 Board Meeting Resolution – Commence the School Term Early
2023-24 School Calendar – Commence the School Term Early
Community Survey Results