



February 26, 2010

Fairfax County Public School Board Members  
8155 Gatehouse Road  
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear School Board Members:

The decision on how to address the days missed for inclement weather is never an easy decision. You have heard from our members, parents, students, and other interested citizens. As elected leaders we count on you to represent your constituencies in this matter.

As you undoubtedly know, the Fairfax Education Association and the Association of Fairfax Professional Educators stand together in opposition to adding time to the instructional day. The primary reason for our vehement opposition is that it will do absolutely nothing to enhance the instructional program—and that, quite frankly, is why we are all here.

We know from prior experience that extra time added to an already long instructional day is hard on children. Many students have difficulty maintaining focus and full engagement in work all day long. The few minutes that will be added to each instructional block won't make a meaningful difference in the quality of instruction. Rather they would add seat time, not learning time.

Outside the instructional day we have concerns about the impact on the health and well-being of our students. Many students eat lunch as early as 10:30 a.m., and a later dismissal would have a negative physical impact. The later opening schools will put children on busses during rush hour, which will extend their travel time and greatly increase evening traffic congestion. Our high school students are concerned about the impact on sports programs, extra-curricular activities, after school work schedules and community-based activities.

While students and their academic program are our first priority, our members are also very frustrated. They, too, must cope with altered schedules interfering with child care, extra jobs, transportation for their children's after school activities, and many other important responsibilities to include volunteer activities worked into their current schedules.

Our members were dismayed to read in *The Bottom Line* that they had to make up the snow days because they had been paid for days they hadn't yet worked. They DID work hours during the snow days updating Blackboard, communicating with parents, grading papers from digital drop boxes, planning lessons and assessments, and communicating with students, parents and fellow employees via email. FCPS employees work well beyond the contract day every day. The implication that all teachers were home making snow angels and sipping hot chocolate rather than continuing to work on instructional matters denigrates our professionalism.

As the elected leaders of FCPS, you set the tone and the expectations for the system. We invite you to take a stand with us and demonstrate that you really mean it when you say that as a "World Class" school system Fairfax County Public Schools has the best teachers and staff and that you support us. Those sentiments ring hollow when year after year there appears to be little or no consideration for your employees.

We urge your support for a fourth option: School on April 12, June 23 and 24, as published in the school calendar, and in tandem, seek a waiver from the State Board of Education for the last two days in June.

Sincerely,



Michael Hairston, FEA Acting President



Mary Kay Downes, AFPE President

cc: J. Dale  
K. North