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Parents, Guardians and Community Members,

We are in the process of planning for the upcoming school year. As we plan, we are very aware that many, if not all, of our families have endured a significant social and emotional toll due to the pandemic. There are many forecasts and theories advancing the idea students have experienced significant learning loss over the past year. Discussions with some of our teachers and our principals confirm the belief that students are behind. Currently, at the high school, 48 percent of our students are flunking at least one class. The number of students we have that are behind in accumulating the credits they need to graduate is approaching similar numbers. We will have summer school this year for the high school, but that alone will not be enough to get many of our high school students to graduation.

This year the state legislature addressed concerns around learning loss, adding funding if districts extend the school year. Our students did not lose learning. What students lost was an opportunity to learn in a traditional setting. Students also lost the in-person supports that many of them need to learn. Students lost the social emotional support network many of them need to grow and thrive. Our school district has several options open to us. One, we can keep our traditional calendar, use the federal money we have, and hope that through student effort, tutoring and summer school we can address learning and high school credit deficits. With the enrollment decline the district experienced this year, this option would result in a decline in operational funding of about \$1.7 million dollars.

Another option is to add ten days to the school calendar to increase learning opportunity and support that was absent for much of this year. This adds \$2.25 million to our funding as state legislation incentivizes districts to add school days. Currently our traditional school calendar begins mid-August and ends at the end of May. Adding ten days would require starting the first week of August to get out at the end of May, or we could start mid-August and get out in June.

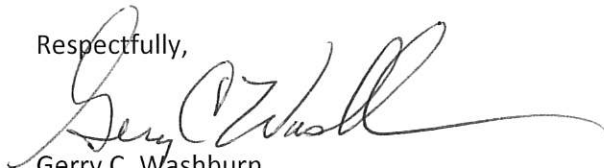
We also have the option to add 25 days to the school year, which adds significant funding to the district, around \$11.4 million dollars, and allows for greater learning opportunities and support. One possible 204-day instructional calendar starts August 2, 2021 and ends June 10, 2021. To get out at the same time we are this year would require shortening Thanksgiving Break by two days and Winter Break by three days.

Over the next two weeks, we are meeting with staff to discuss these options and will be bringing a recommendation to the School Board at the May 18, 2021 meeting. To obtain community input on the length of the school year we will be sending out a community survey the first week of May. We will also be surveying staff at the same time. While funding might be available for two or three years, we are only considering adding the days for one year. We will need to evaluate whether the addition of days is helping to address student learning needs and whether funding is available before we continue a school calendar with additional days.

Several parents are considering retention for their children because of the loss of learning opportunities and support. We are not approving any retentions at this time. We need to determine how long our school year will be and what leaning supports we can put in place before we begin retention conversations. Our elementary classes across the district are around 450 students per grade. If ten percent or even five percent of parents want us to retain their student(s) we simply do not have the space, staff or funding to accommodate retention on that scale. Retention may be in the best interest of a small number of students and we will address those on a case by case basis once we have a clear plan for student support and growth.

Some people have asked if we are starting in July. We are not. Some of our high school staff are going to teach summer school for the remainder of June. Starting in July would not give people who have worked long and hard any kind of a break. From a learning and financial perspective, adding 25 days to our instructional calendar would be the most beneficial. This change does present logistical challenges. Whatever calendar we choose, change is necessary for us to navigate back to a calendar and instructional framework where we focus on learning, rather than catching up. If you have questions, concerns or suggestions please e-mail them to gerry.washburn@carlsbadschools.net. Please watch for the survey and respond when it comes out. We will continue to keep you updated as we move through this process and look forward to bringing a recommendation to the Board in May.

Respectfully,



Gerry C. Washburn
Superintendent