

NEA-NH Statement on Proposal to Start School After Labor Day

All quotes can be attributed to Megan Tuttle, NEA-New Hampshire President.

- As educators, we constantly strive to connect with each child to help them discover their passions and unlock their potential. We are deeply committed to the success of every student. So when well-meaning politicians, and others whose classroom experience is limited to the time they spent in one as a child, propose ideas that will impact kids, we take notice. Especially when the idea is proposed, not as a way to improve education, but as a solution to a business problem.
- Serious consideration of this idea solely as a method to help the tourism industry maintain a workforce through the Labor Day weekend, completely ignores the importance of the work done in our classrooms each day.
- This proposal sounds like another example of trying to run the state's public education system like a business, and that approach never works out well for students.
- If the Governor is interested in a more meaningful discussion on the length of the school year and school day, later starting times, how best to utilize the time we are given to teach, how many days can be reclaimed as teaching days with the elimination of standardized testing, and other ideas meant to improve our education system, we'd be happy to engage in such a discussion. But balancing tourism revenue on the backs of our students is not a helpful suggestion. If that is the reason to start the school year after Labor Day, then maybe the extra revenue the state gets from having more tourists should go to education.

Background and Effects of the Proposal:

- There are also very practical reasons local school districts changed their starting dates to before Labor Day, including the weather. Most schools in NH are not air conditioned. If you start after Labor Day, you run the chance of being in school until late June or even July if there are even just a few snow days. It is a nightmare to be in a crowded classroom with the temperatures reaching above 90° with no air conditioning.
- Moving to an hours-based school calendar instead of a days-based calendar could lessen the number of contact hours with students. If the district goes to an hour-based schedule, then the students end up being out of school for 11-12 weeks. How does this extended period away from school benefit children? A gap this long over the summer leads to students forgetting more information, especially the low-income students who don't have the financial means to travel

and experience the cultural opportunities that wealthier students have.

- If we are truly doing this for the benefit of the children and not the tourism dollars, let's focus on later starting times for the school day that has been proven more beneficial.
- The conversation about education needs to change in New Hampshire. Educators should not have to constantly defend what they do, how they teach, and what they need in order to give their students the best education possible. This proposal did not come as the result of meeting with teachers and parents and asking what they thought was best for the students in our state. It seems to be driven only by the desire for profits for one sector of our economy, and in the process degrading our education system, the very system that was meant to improve the entire economy.

Other NEA-NH Initiatives:

- In an effort to help communicate the good work educators do every day, teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff across NH have been encouraged to write, tweet and post the positive things they do every day for the children they work with.
- We are piloting a new program called Adopt-A-Legislator in Concord and in the Keene area this year to connect 4th graders with their local Representatives and Senators. More details about this program will be released later this month.
- We are also going to be out in the schools 3-4 times a month encouraging reading by focusing on Read Across NH to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of Read Across America and have teamed up with the Manchester Monarchs to help in this effort.

Closing:

- As educators, we believe in kids and the success story that is just waiting to happen inside each one of them. If we're really serious about education and about doing what's best for every child's future, we need to focus on what works, and engage in the work of making all our public schools the best they can be.