



Monticello Community School District

2015-16 School Calendar

Questions & Answers

1. Why are we changing from days to hours? What are the differences?

The Iowa Legislature passed and Governor Branstad signed legislation mandating the earliest school start date to be August 23. If Monticello Schools had remained on a “days” based calendar the last day for students (excluding snow days) would have been June 2, 2016. The district is adding 20 minutes to each school day which allows Monticello Schools to provide students 9.73 more hours of instruction during the 2015-16 school year than was given during the 2014-15 school year while still scheduling an end date of May 27, 2016 (barring any full snow days to be made up).

2. How many hours of instruction are necessary to be considered a day of school?

In years past when using a “days” based calendar, a school day required 5.5 hours of instructional time, which excluded lunch. For an “hours” based calendar Districts are required to use the building which offered the fewest number of contact hours as our benchmark for hours in a school day. Monticello’s elementary schools provide 6.584 hours of instruction per day, which is the fewest hours in the district.

When using an “hours” based calendar, there are no set hours of instruction required for a day of school, however the Code of Iowa requires 1080 hours of instruction time per year. By definition, instructional time is all the time students are scheduled to be at school minus lunch time. Our new calendar offers 5.25 hours of instructional time per day when an early dismissal is scheduled and 6.584 hours of instructional time per full school day. Our calendar schedules 1117.98 hours of instructional time, exceeding the state requirement by 37.98 hours or 5.772 days. Furthermore, the 2015-16 calendar exceeds the number of hours of instructional time offered in the 2014-15 calendar by 9.73 hours or 1.5568 days. The end result is more scheduled instructional time for students using fewer calendar days. Also, please note that contrary to previous years, there are no 1:00 PM dismissals in the 2015-16 calendar. All scheduled early dismissals will occur at 2:00 PM.

3. What happens if we have a delay or early dismissal due to weather, etc., do we have to make up those hours?

There are 37.98 hours built into the calendar to address this issue. Using 2 hours for late start/early dismissal as a benchmark, Monticello Schools could have up to 18 late start/early dismissal occurrences without having to add time to the calendar. The number of available late start/early dismissals would vary if the District is forced by unforeseen circumstances to deviate from the 2 hour benchmark (i.e. weather conditions force a 3 hour early dismissal). It is very unlikely the district would use this number of late start/early dismissal hours. However, if the District does hit the 18 event threshold it would be in a position in which it would have to cancel the entire day rather than have a late start. The Code of Iowa requires teacher contracts be written in terms of days, not hours. If Monticello Schools had a nineteenth late start and added two hours to the end of the school year that would have the net effect of adding a day to each teacher’s contract without negotiations which would put the district in violation of the Code of Iowa and the Master Agreement between the Monticello Community School District and the Monticello Education Association.

4. What if there is a school cancellation, due to weather, etc., does that day need to be made up?

If Monticello Schools cancels an entire day for any reason it will make up the day at the end of the school year. If a day is cancelled for an unforeseen event for one building only, for example a water main break or a boiler malfunction, the district could count the hours students in other buildings meet toward the required hours for the entire district. However, this does not apply to dismissing a building for athletic events. If a building dismisses to allow students to attend a state level athletic event, the entire district can only count the number of hours that particular building was in session.

5. If there are hours still remaining at the end of the school year, why do we need make up days?

The Code of Iowa requires that teacher contracts be written in terms of days, not hours. The District's Master Agreement with the Monticello Education Association stipulates a 195 day contract, 6 days of which are holidays, netting 189 teacher work days. You will note this calendar does have 189 working days for teachers. To remove hours from the end of the school year and then not have teachers report would have the net effect of paying teachers to not work. To bring teachers in for PD or Collaboration time would be ineffective at best as there would not be adequate planning for these events. The District does not want to offer fewer hours/minutes of instruction to our students than was offered under the 180 day calendar. The proposed calendar nets about 1.6 days worth of hours/minutes of additional instruction.

6. Why do we need to add 20 minutes on to the end of the school day? Why can't we add it at the beginning?

Several years ago when the District was considering the addition of early outs for Professional Development the feedback we received indicated parents could more easily adjust their child care at the end of the day as opposed to the beginning of the day. The District took this previously gained information into consideration, as well as feedback which indicated parents already have a set schedule for preparing their students for the school day. Furthermore, there is research which indicates earlier start times have a detrimental impact on student performance.

7. How will the longer school day effect after school activities?

It should have no impact on High School activities. On the Middle School level, there will be minimal time lost when traveling to away events.

8. Why are we starting later this year?

Pursuant to Iowa Code 279.10, as amended by Senate File 227 during the 2015 legislative session, all Iowa school districts and accredited nonpublic schools are required to begin the school year no earlier than August 23. The only exceptions to this legislation are for districts and nonpublic schools that apply for and receive permission from the Iowa Department of Education to operate a year-round calendar for one or more elementary and/or prekindergarten through eighth grade attendance centers. There is no waiver available for high schools.

9. Why do we have Spring Break?

Monticello Schools has aligned its spring break with JREC's due to the sharing of students and staff between the two entities. Furthermore, our attendance data shows a .5% increase in average daily attendance since the implementation of Spring Break. This amounts to averaging an additional 5.4 students in school each school day.

10. What are Teacher Team days?

The purpose of Teacher Team Days (also called Collaboration Days) is to provide teachers with opportunities to work in their Professional Learning Communities in order to apply Professional Development learning to student instruction. These days help us reach our state-mandated number of teacher collaboration hours. Administration will be tracking teacher use of Collaboration Day time in order to gather data to help the District determine the best use of the time.

- *Why are there 6 of them during the school year?*
 - *In past years teachers had 45 minutes at the end of the work day to collaborate and team for various purposes. This time has been reduced by 20 minutes in the new calendar. By adding collaboration time back into the calendar teachers will regain meaningful team time as well as have time to meet with instructional coaches, special education staff and other various learning supports staff throughout the district to improve teaching and learning for each student in the district.*
- *How are they different than Professional Learning days?*
 - *Professional Learning days are focused on specific initiatives at the building and district level.*

11. Why are there more 'no school' days for students next year vs. this year?

There are three additional 'no school' days built into the calendar for 2015-2016. Are students losing out on too much 'instruction' time? No, by moving to the 'hours' system, District students will actually have more instruction time.

12. What are "floating" work days?

"Floating" work days are flexible work days that may be held based on the needs and schedules of the teachers. The "floating" work days may consist of partial or whole days as long as they meet contractual obligations. Are they for teachers only? Yes.

13. Why do we have 2:00 PD dismissals and full PD days?

2:00 PM Dismissals are used to support teacher learning and Iowa Department of Education required peer review. District full PD days are spent learning new initiatives that teachers then take back and put into practice in their classrooms. Many times the 2:00 dismissal times are spent in following up learning from full PD days. Teachers also meet in Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) teams to score student work, teacher assessment tasks and Instruction. When scoring instruction through AIW teachers are taking part in DE required peer review. Every teacher that is not on their formal evaluation year (once every three years) are required to have a minimum of one peer review per year.

14. How is the calendar determined?

The Calendar Committee, consisting of one teacher from each building, building and District administration, and the principal of Sacred Heart School, meets to construct the calendar. Factors considered by the Calendar Committee include: 1) Requirements placed upon school districts by the Code of Iowa; 2) Required Carnegie Units for the High School (Carnegie Units are the amount of time a class must be scheduled in order to meet Department of Education requirements for granting credit for taking a class); 3) The Master Agreement between the Monticello Community School District and the Monticello Education Association; 4) the impact of the calendar on Sacred Heart School; and 5) the schedule of Kirkwood's Jones Regional Education Center (JREC).

15. Why do we need to follow Kirkwood's Jones Regional Education Center (JREC) schedule?

Kirkwood's JREC follows the Monticello Schools calendar with the exception of early release times, semester start/end dates (due to legislation that requires a district start date after August 23), and spring break. Monticello Schools has aligned its spring break with JREC's due to the sharing of students and staff between the two entities. Furthermore, JREC is not the only factor impacting the school calendar (see question number 14).

16. Why are make-up days only added to the end of the school year?

Data gathered this year showed a sharp increase in absenteeism on the make-up days scheduled during Spring Break.

17. Why is there a 2:00 early dismissal on the 1st and 2nd day of school?

To allow teachers to meet for collaboration purposes.

18. How does each level intend to utilize the additional instructional time?

- High School: The high school plans to build in an intervention time to help students for either remediation or enrichment.*
- Middle School: Some discussion on the additional time has included: adding an additional amount of time for 2nd chance math and/or reading, or possibly adding more time for RtI that is currently 25 minutes.*
- Elementary: The elementary plans to build in more time to implement science and social studies curriculum due to the legislated requirements for increased instructional time in reading and math.*

2015-16 School Day Hours

High School:	8:05am – 3:15pm
Middle School:	8:02am – 3:15pm
Carpenter Elementary:	8:15am – 3:15pm
Shannon Elementary:	8:15am – 3:15pm