

Watauga Schools Calendar Press Release

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At its meeting Monday night, the Watauga County Board of Education formally adopted a school calendar with a starting date of August 19th for the 2013-14 school year. The Board's action eliminates the possibility that schools could start on August 7th as proposed in an alternative school calendar that had remained an option prior to last night's meeting. The Board had previously held off making a final decision about the school calendar in the hope that the NC General Assembly would amend the current school calendar law to allow for an earlier starting date. There was reason to believe that might happen, as literally dozens of bills have been introduced in the General Assembly to restore local control of school calendars. However, the legislature has not taken up any of the proposed bills and it now appears very unlikely to do so before its expected adjournment in late June or July.

The Board meeting Monday also included the decision to make the final day of the current school year – June 12th - an early release day. Students in the K-8 schools will be dismissed at 12:00 and students at the high school will be dismissed at 1:00 p.m. on June 12th.

August 19th will be the latest starting date for Watauga County Schools in many years and the late start is likely to generate two substantial challenges. First, it will make it very difficult for students who finish high school at the end of the first semester to go directly to college after graduation. These students may have to wait until summer or fall to begin their college studies. The second challenge will be adjusting the school calendar for winter closings without running deep into June to make up missed days.

The adopted calendar for 2013-14 has May 30th as the last scheduled day for students, but it's important to note that schools are closed about 15 days for winter weather in a typical year. If schools are closed 15 days next year, spring break would be shortened by at least two days and the last day of school could be pushed back to June 18th unless schools can be opened on Saturdays to make up some of the lost time. While the school system has a make-up plan that authorizes holding classes on Saturdays after schools are closed five days for inclement weather, Saturday openings are often not possible because of continued winter weather, poor road conditions, and conflicting uses of school buildings on weekends. If next winter is like this one, when schools were closed 19 days and Saturdays could not be used to make up any of the missed time, the last day of school for students could be pushed back to June 24th.

The complete school calendar for 2013-14, including scheduled holidays, teacher workdays, and the dates for parent/teacher conferences, is available under the calendar heading on the WCS website (www.watauga.k12.nc.us).