Mount Baker
SCHOOL DISTRICT

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May 9, 2017

Dear Washington State Board of Education,

I would like to thank you for your consideration of the Mount Baker School District's application for waiver of the 180 day school year. The three days per year requested in this waiver request are critical to our school districts ability to provide the professional development necessary for our staff to meet the demands of meaningful state standards and the instructional improvements which are indicated by our new and more rigorous evaluations system. We take this work seriously, we see the benefit to our students in these changes, and the time requested will allow us to continue meaningful improvement work in our district.

As a small rural district we do not have the resources to add professional days beyond what is currently in our teacher's contract. We are currently able to locally fund three days which occur prior to the start of the school year for students. These days include professional development but are also critical for staff to prepare their classrooms, complete required trainings on a wide range of topics for serving students with specific health issues to workplace issues like harassment. Building Administrators use this time to provide training on instructional practices but also need time for topics such as the staff handbook, discipline procedures, sexual harassment and bullying training, introduction of new staff, and policies and procedures. This time before the year is further used to promote family engagement when our schools open the school for visits by students and families to promote familiarity and positive transition. All of this is necessary for an efficient opening of the school at the start of the year, necessary work on the school improvement planning work, mandatory training and building a positive relationship with families and the community.

During this limited time it is not possible to meet the many professional development needs generated by meaningful school improvement plans. One additional locally funded day is all that is left to us to address all of our remaining professional development needs during the school year if our waiver is not approved. The three additional waiver days allow a fall, winter, and spring professional learning day in support of meaningful professional growth for all staff to meet the needs of our students.

I urge your support of this application and the good work it allows us to do for the benefit of our students.

Sincerely,

Charles Burleigh
Superintendent

MOUNT BAKER SCHOOL DISTRICT