



TERRY E. BRANSTAD
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KIM REYNOLDS
LT. GOVERNOR

Dec. 12, 2014

Director Brad Buck
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th St.
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Director Buck,

Iowans share a deep commitment to giving our children a world-class education. At the same time, frustration is growing because of the exceedingly early school start dates some school districts set. Start dates ranged from Aug. 11 to Sept. 2 this year.

Starting in early to mid-August unnecessarily interferes with families' summer plans and seasonal hiring while it does nothing to improve the quality of education. It also results in students missing class to participate in 4-H, FFA and other Iowa State Fair activities. Meanwhile, a new state law lets schools set a school calendar with the traditional 180 instructional days or 1,080 hours, providing new flexibility.

The reasons above are why I am writing to request that the Iowa Department of Education no longer automatically grant waivers to the 1983 state law that says school shall begin no sooner than a day in the calendar week in which the first day of September falls, or if Sept. 1 falls on a Sunday, school may begin on a day in the week immediately preceding Sept. 1.

Waivers should be considered only if school districts demonstrate that starting on or after the earliest start day specified would have a "significant negative educational impact," as required by state law.

I am confident that school districts will work to adjust to this change.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry E. Branstad".

Terry E. Branstad
Governor of Iowa