

## **School Year Calendar** by **Clarissa Johnson, Associate Superintendent**

How does the Alamogordo Public Schools determine what the calendar will look like for any given school year? There are many State requirements placed on school districts as well as many local interests and needs. To begin, throughout the year comments on the existing calendar are made by our community, staff, parents, students and School Board which are noted and considered in the development of the new year calendar. As per Board Policy a Calendar Committee is formulated that consists of one elementary and one secondary principal and teacher, a classified employee, a parent, a community member, and one elementary and one secondary NEA representative. This group provides their ideas and input from others in making determinations on what the calendar will look like. Drafts are developed and sent out to the schools for their input and changes are made that reflect what the majority of feedback indicates is the desired direction. This may happen several times.

While the Calendar Committee is considering the ideas of others, they also have their eye on the expectations. A school district must have 180 school days or the equivalent number of hours which translates to 990 hours for elementary and 1080 hours for secondary. There is also an expectation that days are provided for teachers to receive continuous updating on their professional skills and knowledge of the most recent scientifically research based teaching methodologies in the core content areas, and this be conducted in an environment which promotes in-depth conversations on the learning processes and their implications for students and teachers. The opportunity for conferences with parents on the progress of their child are provided for in the requirements for elementary students with an annual 22 hours allowed for elementary, 18 hours for middle school and 12 hours for high school. Meeting the need to have conversations with parents to know how their child is performing in that amount of time is quite challenging, particularly when progress can go up or down in a short period of time. Parents expect some quality time when their concerns may be heard and support may be provided. Interest in how their child is doing isn't just confined to early fall. They want information and to be able to talk to the teacher(s) throughout the year. In respect of that consideration, three additional days each semester are built into the calendar as CIA days. Now this doesn't stand for the Central Intelligence Agency but it's a pretty good facsimile to the gathering of many for the building of common intelligence on what needs to be done to ensure each student has their best access to learning and each teacher has the best skills and knowledge to get there. None of this can be done in isolation. The Continuous Improvement and Advisory days provide for ongoing conversations with parents, students and between teachers as professionals working together for students.

Of course, national holidays come in to play in the process. Also opportunities for families, that are more often than not, spread throughout the country want to get together during Thanksgiving, and Christmas or more politically correct Winter Holiday. Spring Break of course is that last regrouping of energy for everyone to make it to the end of the year.

Does the calendar make everyone happy? Of course not. To do so would be a miracle. It does however attempt to represent the needs and wants of the many while providing many environments that support learning in our schools.