

## July happens to be my favorite month of the year



July happens to be my favorite month of the year. As an educator, my guess is you'd expect me to say it's because we celebrate our freedom as a nation on July 4th and, yes, this is one of the reasons I love July. I can't imagine living in any other country than the United States of America where all children regardless of race or ethnicity or zip code are educated; where Thomas Jefferson lobbied for a system of public schools and where 60 years later Horace Mann was able to bring Jefferson's dream to fruition. I'm very proud of the public schools in Kansas and even more proud of the teachers, students, staff, parents and communities which make our schools among the best in the nation.

But the reason July is my favorite month is that it evokes memories of my childhood. My family celebrated July 4th in similar fashion to Christmas. July 4th was a day that everything stopped for my family-especially for my dad. My dad was, and is to this day, a farmer. Farming in Kansas in July means wheat harvest. Even though there was precious little time between the wheat being ready to harvest and the next summer thunderstorm, my dad always rested and celebrated on the 4th of July. My mom would fry chicken and make potato salad and we'd pack up the slide-in camper and head to the local park for a day of baseball tournaments, riding our bikes, free swimming at the pool, fireworks and a street dance. It was a carefree day for everyone but it seems even more poignant as I get older. I didn't realize it then, but I now know how much of a sacrifice it was for my dad to slow down during the busiest time of the year. A good wheat crop meant dinner would be on the table and maybe even a weekend trip across the state in the camper with my parents, brother and two sisters. Yes, six of us packed in a Huntsman camper! It doesn't get much better than this!

Oh, and did I mention July is my birthday month? Ah, yes, the reason July is my favorite month!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Diane DeBacker  
Kansas Commissioner of Education