

To: Dr. Mike Riggle

From: Dr. Rosanne Williamson

Re: School Calendar Survey Results

Date: February 21, 2019

**Findings & Recommendations:**

Attached are two documents that outline the work of the School Calendar Survey Review Committee. *Hanover Survey Further Data Analysis* and recommended revisions to the *School Calendar Preparation Guidelines*.

**Process:**

A committee was formed for the purpose of further analyzing the data results from the school calendar survey administered to the District 225 school community by Hanover Research. The charge to the committee was to spend time looking at all aspects of the survey results to identify findings the committee feels are significant and worthy of consideration. Finally, the committee reviewed the advertised School Calendar Preparation Guidelines and is recommending possible changes to that document to the Board of Education.

**Committee Membership:**

The membership of the committee will consisted of the following:

- One instructional supervisor from each school (2)
- Three teachers selected in collaboration with the GEA (3)
- Two parents from each school (4)
- Two students from each school (4)
- One support staff member from each school (2)

The school principals identified some committee participants. Overall, the membership of the committee was representative of the academic, activity, athletics and fine arts areas of our schools.

## **Hanover Survey Further Data Analysis**

### Aspects Respondents Like Most (Option 1, Collegiate Calendar)

- AP exams coincide w/end of the school year
- Final exams occur before winter break
- Positive impact on winter vacation time (no studying/homework)

### Aspects Respondents Like Least (Option 1, Collegiate Calendar)

- School starts too early in August
- Some activities for students before winter break may be eliminated (school traditions)
  - GBS: Chambers
  - GBN: Express
  - Important sports games

### Aspects Respondents Like Most (Option 2, Traditional Calendar)

- School year starts later in August
- Activities before winter break are preserved

### Aspects Respondents Like Least (Option 2, Traditional Calendar)

- Nothing further identified or discussed by committee

### Impact of Collegiate Calendar

- Concern regarding schedule alignment with feeder districts
- Grading impact on teachers (44% negative)
- (pg. 21) Different schedule than feeder schools impact family (vacation times)
- Students like a true break - no pressure over head - 2 weeks to forget and not feel need to do work

### **Final Exams**

- Currently break kills studying environment
- Students care about final date much more than other groups
- Currently losing time due to catch-up after break
- Students do study over winter break
- Exams are often spread over several days and not limited to final exam schedule

### **Homework/Projects/Unit Exams**

- Homework along w/studying trying not to forget what you (students) learned when finals after break
- Students getting lots of big test/assignments before break and then exams

### **Other Considerations:**

- If changing the calendar for exams - maybe rethink final exams
- Finals should be less than what they are right now (current weight 20%)
- Many nearly 50/50 split responses on questions
- Balanced semesters - number of days

- Consider meaning to the week after break - use of that week by teachers if traditional calendar
- Stress issue: Data suggests winter break is not terribly stressful for students (Pg. 32)
- How to manage stress
- Respondents want exams prior to break but not an early start to the school year

**Additional Questions to Explore/Data Disaggregation:**

Questions:

- What types of learning activities are students currently engaged in after winter break, but before final exam week?
- Data is based on survey questions forced choice either Option 1 or Option 2, is there another option or options to be considered?
- Current conditions (student stress) were not really (purely) measured in this survey
- Look at data from other districts who have changed calendars to determine how the change is going and the various impacts.

Data Disaggregation:

- Sender school parent response vs. high school parent response (sender school parents may not know/understand high school life)
- Can Hanover pull out data set without elementary or at least without K-5 as K-5 parents may not understand issues with finals
- Pg. 20 - Taking 1st semester Final Exams after Winter Break - data is not broken out by interest groups - students, staff, parents

# School Calendar Preparation Guidelines

Consider an introductory statement articulating the goal of the guidelines is to provide flexibility in calendar preparation and improve student wellness.

For planning purposes and as a service to our students, staff, and school community, Glenbrook High School District 225 develops its school calendar two years in advance. District 225 works collaboratively with all township feeder districts (27, 28, 30, 31, and 34) to coordinate winter and spring breaks. The beginning and ending dates for the school year, as well as holidays and professional development days, are likely to vary for each district. An effort will be made to align the beginning and end dates of school within one week of feeder district calendars. The following factors ~~are~~ may be considered in developing the final calendar:

- ~~The school year provides for 178 student attendance days and 5 additional staff attendance days, for a total of 183 days. (Consider restating as the length of the calendar is determined by the Illinois School Code and the collective bargaining agreement)~~
- Ten emergency days are scheduled as part of the calendar to compensate for emergency closings. These days will be canceled if they are not needed. (Explore alternative learning arrangements as substitutes for emergency days.)
- For academic purposes, efforts ~~are~~ should be made to schedule a balanced comparable number of student attendance days for each ~~grading period and~~ semester.
- Three Glenbrook Days for faculty work and professional development are scheduled for the school year. ~~Two of these are scheduled in August, immediately prior to when the students are scheduled to start school. The third Glenbrook Day occurs in June and is the last day of attendance by teachers. (Consider leaving when these occur flexible.)~~
- A maximum of eight granted holidays are marked with an “X” and typically they include: Day after Thanksgiving, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Christmas Eve, New Year’s Eve, and Good Friday.
- Legal holidays are marked on the calendar with a “X” if they fall during the week. They include: New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King’s Birthday\*, Lincoln’s Birthday\*, Casimir Pulaski Day\*, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day\*, Veteran’s Day\*, the day before Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

\*The Board held a public hearing and took official action approving legal school holiday modifications for the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (third Monday in January), the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln (February 12), the birthday of Casimir Pulaski (first Monday in March), Columbus Day (second Monday in October), and Veterans’ Day (November 11). Although traditionally only Lincoln’s Birthday, Pulaski Day and Columbus Day are modified for use as a student attendance day or District Institute Day, approving modifications to all legal school holidays allows for greater flexibility. The day before Thanksgiving may also be modified as a student attendance day. (Consider adding more late arrival days if more holidays are used for student attendance or if Institute Day

[Pulaski Day] is eliminated for student attendance.)

- Winter break ~~will~~ may typically include two full weeks and three weekends to accommodate travel and vacation plans for our students and families.
- Spring break will generally be one week and is consistently scheduled during the last full week in March. ~~, so as not to conflict with school board elections in April.~~  
Consider restating to, half-way through the semester.
- Graduation Day for seniors is typically scheduled to occur on the Sunday before the last week of school for non-seniors. (Consider flexibility of graduation day such as not falling on a Sunday)
- ~~All calendars are available on the district and school websites.~~ Is this a necessary statement since it doesn't have to do with calendar preparation?
- The district works collaboratively with feeder districts and other stakeholders such as employee groups and park districts in developing the calendar.