

D-99 board endorses Monday late-start schedule

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DOWNERS GROVE – Students at Downers Grove North and South high schools will get to sleep in a bit on Mondays next school year if a plan to adopt a new late-start schedule is approved.

Community High School District 99 Board of Education members May 15 endorsed the proposal, which calls for a 9:30 a.m. start time beginning the Monday after Labor Day.

District officials believe the plan creates a more consistent schedule that better promotes student learning.

“We really believe that for students and staff there’s a consistency factor,” Superintendent Henry Thiele said.

The proposal requires Regional Office of Education approval before the school board can finalize it at the June 19 meeting.

The plan has community support. About 80 percent of parents and students who responded to a district survey believe the primary benefit of the change is a more consistent schedule.

The district chose a 9:30 a.m. start time because it is the earliest the school day can begin without affecting the joint bus transportation contract with school districts 58 and 68.

Additionally, the two high schools cannot afford to lose the additional instructional time necessary to start the school day at 10 a.m. or later on a weekly basis. Class periods will be 36 minutes on Mondays, 14 minutes shorter than regularly scheduled days when classes begin at 8 a.m.

Monday was chosen because the majority of non-attendance days and holidays fall on a Monday. There are eight Mondays in the 2017-18 calendar when school is not in session.

As a result, selecting Mondays as the late-start day is a practical way to implement a weekly late-start format, as it limits the increase in the number of total late-start days, officials said.

District officials believe the plan increases the amount of time teachers will have to meet in teams. The weekly format also allows teachers to respond more quickly to student needs and concerns, Thiele said. Currently, such needs might not be addressed for two weeks or longer, he said.