

D-99 keeps traditional calendar, eyes earlier start in future

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DOWNERS GROVE – Downers Grove high school students could be starting the 2017-18 school year earlier than usual.

On Feb. 1, Community High School District 99 Board of Education approved a “traditional” start date for the upcoming 2016-17 school year, but a majority of the board is committed to starting the school year earlier for 2017-18.

For 2016-17, the school year will start Aug. 29 and end June 8, with winter break from Dec. 17 to Jan. 2 and spring break from March 25 to April 2.

The district, which includes Down-

ers Grove North and South high schools, was considering an earlier start to the 2016-17 school year in order to end the first semester before winter break.

With the traditional calendar, students take their final exams three weeks after winter break, which district administrators and parents say disrupts the semester and adds stress to students who study during the break.

Several comparable school districts, including Hinsdale Township High School District 86 and DuPage High School District 88, already have adopted an early start calendar.

A calendar committee recommended District 99 stay with the traditional calendar for at least one more year be-

cause it would be too short of a notice to make the change.

Superintendent Mark McDonald said there will be several new administrators next year, including his position, who will benefit from keeping the traditional calendar.

“Having a week to 10 more days to prepare for the school year would be very helpful to them,” he said.

The calendar committee also recommended it continue to study how to change the calendar. However, a majority of the board wants to commit to starting the 2017-18 school year earlier.

“If we put this off to study, it’s just going to wither on the vine,” board member Rick Pavinato said.

The main arguments against starting the school year earlier are the lack of air conditioning in the schools and the breaks would not align with local elementary school districts.

McDonald said more August school days mean more possible days of extreme heat.

He presented several possible calendars that had school starting seven to 13 days earlier than normal, but he said the later the school year started, the harder it will be to finish the semester by winter break.

All of the proposed early start calendars would have winter break starting five to seven days later than in the traditional calendar.