

D-99 finalizing early start for 2017-18 calendar

By DAN FARNHAM
dfarnham@shawmedia.com

DOWNERS GROVE – The Community High School District 99 board of education will vote during its May 16 meeting on whether to approve a 2017-18 school year calendar that would have classes start more than a week earlier than the upcoming school year.

The district and a majority of the board want to move up the start date so students at Downers Grove North

and South high schools can take their first semester final exams before the two-week winter break.

The board discussed the proposed calendar during its May 2 meeting, and the central focus was whether the first day of school should be on a Friday or Monday.

The proposed calendar would start Friday, Aug. 18, and the last day before winter break would be Dec. 21.

Superintendent Mark McDonald said the calendar was constructed this way so the district could get enough

instructional days in the first semester while having a make-up day on Dec. 22 in case classes need to be canceled one day during the semester.

However, two board members said they would prefer the district to start the year on Monday, Aug. 21, so the students do not start school the day before a weekend and families can have one more vacation weekend during the summer.

“The chances of us needing an emergency day are really minimal in that first semester,” board member Mi-

chael Davenport said.

McDonald said the district has canceled one December school day because of snow in his 13 years with the district.

However, a majority of the board agreed with the Friday start date if it is the only way to have an emergency day.

“I would prefer to start on the 21st, but I am not about to vote on the 21st because that gives us no contingencies,” board member Don Renner said.

See **CALENDAR**, page 13

The board wants to avoid a scenario in which students would have to take a final exam the first day after winter break, because having finals before winter break is the point of the new calendar.

Some on the board also saw an advantage to starting the year on a Friday.

“[The first day is] not a day [students are] going to be doing a lot in the classroom, other than they’re going to be getting all of their lists of supplies from their teachers and syllabuses,” board member Deborah Boyle said. “Then they have the whole weekend to get everything, and they can start right on Monday.”

Board President Nancy Kupka said she supports the proposed calendar because she trusts the judgment of the calendar committee that made it. The district conducted surveys and formed a committee to work on the calendar after some community members opposed the earlier start.

Downer Grove Grade School District 58 said it will not align its calendar to the earlier start because its schools do not have air conditioning for the hotter summer days. Families with students in both school districts said different start dates could disrupt family vacation plans.

Key dates for District 99

- **AUG. 18:** Community High School District 99 start date for 2017-18 school year
- **OCT. 4:** Parent conferences (tentatively scheduled)
- **NOV. 22:** Half-day of school instead of a full day off.
- **DEC. 19-21:** First-semester final exams (Dec. 22 available as emergency day)
- **DEC. 22:** Start of winter break
- **JAN. 8:** Start of second semester
- **MARCH 23-APRIL 2:** Spring break
- **MAY 22-24:** Second-semester final exams
- **MAY 25:** Graduation (tentatively scheduled)
- The calendar would eliminate Casimir Pulaski Day as a non-attendance day. Veterans Day will be during a weekend and Good Friday will be during spring break, so the district does not need to work those non-attendance days into the schedule.

McDonald said the district did work with District 58 to make a schedule that best accommodates both districts.

“Given a choice of alternatives, it was better to align our winter holiday break than [the] beginning of school,” he said.