

District 225

School Calendar Feedback

Calendar Committee

29 April 2017



Introduction

Purpose

To provide District 225 staff members with basic information prior to collecting their input as part of the 2018-2019 school calendar decision making process.

Background

Each spring, the District 225 Board of Education adopts a school calendar that allows the schools and the school community to plan well in advance. The 2017-2018 school calendar was adopted last spring. We are now in the process of gathering input to make a calendar recommendation to the Board of Education for the 2018-2019 school year. The district administration normally develops several drafts of school calendars for consideration that are based on the [School Calendar Preparation Guidelines](#) posted on the District 225 website. The drafts are subsequently provided to the building administrations for review and input. Following review and further revision, the drafts are shared with the union leadership for input. In addition, the draft calendars are shared with the elementary feeder district superintendents to gain their input on how the proposed calendars will impact the elementary school communities.

Traditional Calendar

A “traditional” calendar is one that begins in late August and ends in early June of the following year. Final exams are administered in January following the winter break. The previously adopted District 225 calendar for the 2017-2018 school year will begin for students on Wednesday, August 23 and end on Wednesday, June 6, provided there are no additional emergency days due to school closings that need to be completed.

Collegiate Calendar

A “collegiate” calendar is one that matches more closely the parameters followed by colleges and universities. A collegiate calendar would in general, start in early to mid-August and end in late May of the following year. First semester final exams, as well as the end of the first semester would take place prior to winter break. The second semester would begin when school resumes after the winter break.

Current Trend

Recently, a growing number of high school districts in our area have adopted a “collegiate” calendar. At the present time, the following area high school districts either have, or will be following a “collegiate” calendar:

District 125 (Stevenson)
District 128 (Libertyville / Vernon Hills)
District 207 (Maine)
District 211 (Palatine)



District 214 (Arlington Heights)

District 219 (Niles)

District 220 (Barrington)

In addition, District 113 (Highland Park / Deerfield) recently announced they will transition to final exams administered prior to the winter break, but will end the first semester after returning from the winter break. Due to construction, District 203 (New Trier) recently followed a modified “collegiate” school calendar and conducted final exams prior to winter break last year with positive reviews from their school community.

Impact

On Athletics

The IHSA athletic calendar is established in conjunction with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA). The calendar is determined by counting weeks beginning with the first full week in July. The primary concern at the present time is the starting dates for Football and all other fall sports. Football may begin on the Monday of Week 6 and all other fall sports may begin on Wednesday of Week 6. Here are the associated dates:

Football: (2016 - August 8); (2017 - August 7); (2018 - August 6)

All other fall sports: (2016 - August 10); (2017 - August 9); (2018 - August 8)


According to the data shared with the Board of Education in May 2016 for the 2015-2016 school year, approximately 1441 students out of a population of 5059, or 28.5% of the district student population participated in a fall sport and would be home for the start of school on a “collegiate” calendar. The only negative cited would be a loss of total practice time (two-a-days) prior to the start of school by the fall athletic teams. This would be the same condition for all area high school teams starting on a “collegiate” calendar.

It is important to note that athletic contest scheduling has become a concern recently for winter sports as many area high schools have changed to a “collegiate” calendar. Schools on a “collegiate” calendar are not available one week prior to winter break due to final exams and schools following a “traditional” calendar are not available to compete for one week after winter break for the same reason. This results in one less week being available for scheduling athletic events between schools on different calendar types.

On Feeder Elementary Districts

The “traditional” school calendar adopted by District 225 has served as the base for the feeder elementary school calendars for many years. Each of the feeder districts has its own calendar nuances, including the number of days that students are in attendance. In general, although each district may elect to start and end on different calendar days, the feeder elementary districts try to set a school calendar that is close to that of the high school district to keep families together as much as possible.

For the last few years, I have been discussing the possible transition to a “collegiate” calendar by the high school district with the elementary feeder district superintendents. Their position has become more amenable over the last few years. The primary concern expressed on behalf of their school communities is that an earlier start in August may negatively impact vacation plans for families and possibly result in reduced attendance levels at the start of the school year.



On the Communities

There are a significant number of entities that will be affected by a change to an earlier start date in August. Primarily, these are entities that provide services to elementary and high school students during the summer months which include the park districts, libraries, and a variety of private camps. If a decision is made to transition to a “collegiate” calendar, it is important that the change be advertised as early as possible.

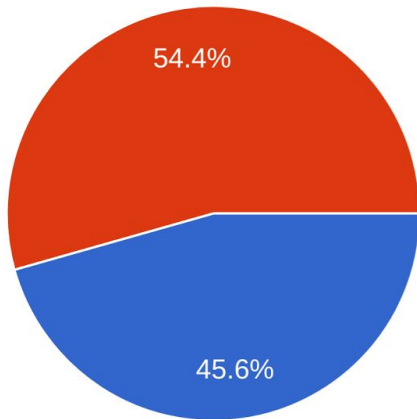
Initial Input

Administrative: For the last four years, District 225 administrators have discussed the possibility of transitioning from a “traditional” school calendar to a “collegiate” school calendar. Until last year, there was only mixed support for the proposed change among administrators. Last year, the feedback on a “collegiate” calendar was more positive in each school, but not quite a majority. This year, after reviewing the drafts for “traditional” and “collegiate” calendars, a significant majority of administrators at both schools recommended transitioning to a “collegiate” school calendar for the 2018-2019 school year.

As part of the feedback collected, the school administrators submitted the following:

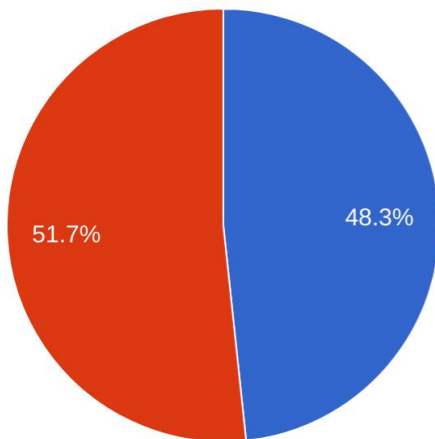
- The shift to a “collegiate” calendar may be a positive for overall student wellness.
- The deadline for submission of semester grades by teachers is an important issue that will need to be resolved.
- The timeline for course registration, the building of the master schedule, and articulation meetings for IEPs will have to be adjusted.
- The “collegiate” calendar will be in sync with that of many of the surrounding high school districts.
- The “collegiate” calendar will allow students and teachers to experience a true break before the holidays without projects and finals looming for after the winter break.
- Additional breaks in instruction will be eliminated and the need for unit closure across all disciplines prior to winter break will no longer be needed.
- Transitioning to a “collegiate” calendar will require a cultural shift and rescheduling of pre-holiday traditions and celebrations.
- The stress of final exams will be shifted to pre-holiday weeks.
- It will be necessary that the calendar matches as closely as possible with our feeder school districts.
- Instructional supervisor contracts will have to be reviewed. More flexibility will be needed.
- Large school functions such as Awards Assemblies, Prom and Graduation will have to be scheduled appropriately and work with AP Exams.
- The “collegiate” calendar may allow better alignment for all students within a family.
- The “collegiate” calendar may not align as well for the traditions of the communities and families with summer plans.
- Remaining with the “traditional” calendar will continue the current condition of discussing the possibility of ending finals before winter break.

Staff: Dr. Riggle shared insights with staff at each building’s April faculty meeting. Following this meeting, District 225 administration invited all staff to provide input on the future calendar. 434 staff members responded: 76% certified staff and 24% support staff. 54% of respondents favored the Collegiate-Style Calendar.



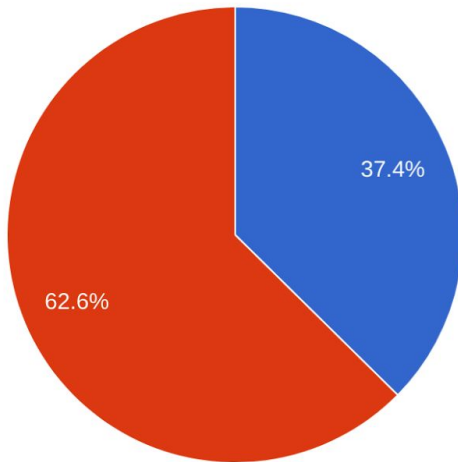
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Certified Staff (staff breakdown): 327 certified staff responded with 52% favoring the Collegiate-Style Calendar.



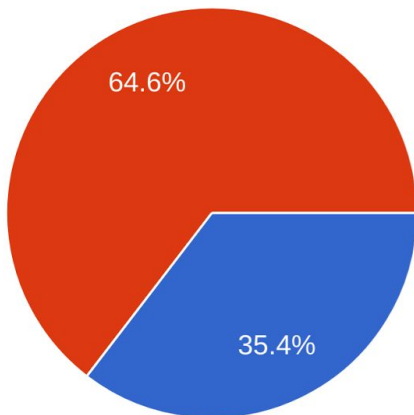
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Non-Certified Staff (staff breakdown): 107 non-certified staff responded with 63% favoring the Collegiate-Style Calendar.



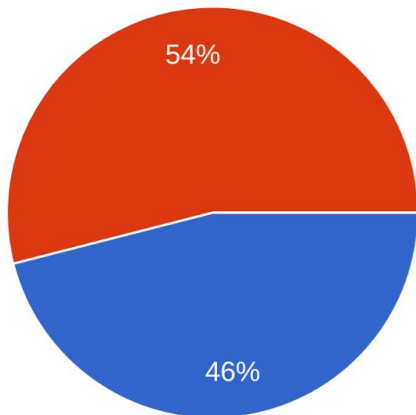
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Students: District 225 administration surveyed current Glenbrook students for their input on the future calendar. 917 students responded with 65% favoring the Collegiate-Style Calendar.



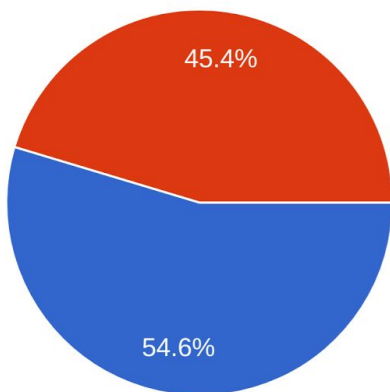
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Current Parents: District 225 administration surveyed current Glenbrook parents for their input on the future calendar. 757 parents responded with 54% favoring the Collegiate-Style Calendar.



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Sender Parents: District 225 administration surveyed current 7th and 8th grade parents from sender districts. The rationale was to survey only those that would be students in District 225 during the implementation year should a new calendar be adopted. 650 parents responded with 55% favoring the Traditional Calendar.



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Narrative Input Themes

As part of the survey, each person was given the opportunity to provide additional comments. The following represents themes that emerged from those comments.

Staff Themes: (164 comments/438 total survey responses)

- **Personal reasons:** family scheduling, childcare, vacations, etc. . .
- **Process questioned:** why only a survey and no other opportunity for input late in the school year?
- **Teacher work-related issues:** grading, preparing, etc. (unknown or burdensome)
- **Research/evidence:** data to support why a collegiate calendar is best for students
- **Split Opinions:** educational value of collegiate vs. traditional calendar

Student Themes: (222 comments/917 total survey responses)

- **Personal and Summer conflicts:** weather, family vacations, camps and schedules with an emphasis on start date
- **Transition:** emphasis of the first summer shortened
- **Split Opinions:** majority see the value of finals before winter break while others like it to study
- **Extracurricular Impact:** winter programs, the arts, assemblies

Parent Themes: (235 comments/757 total survey responses)

- **Summer conflicts:** weather, family vacations, camps and schedules with an emphasis on start date
- **Township alignment needed:** Support, only if it aligns with Feeders
- **Academic rationale questioned/needed**
- **Communication:** athletically driven letter fostering perception that D225 devalues arts
- **Process questioned**

Sender Parent Themes: (185 comments/650 total survey responses)

- **August date is too early:** weather, family vacations, camps and schedules
- **Township alignment needed:** Support, only if it aligns with Feeders
- **Educational value:** having finals before break perceived as better for students
- **Alternatives needed:** supportive in general, but please consider alternatives
- **Academic rationale questioned/needed**



Conclusion

