



District begins to explore possibility of balanced calendar

School officials are beginning to look at the possibility of implementing a district-wide balanced school calendar year that could potentially be in place for students for the 2016-17 school year.

Hill Elementary, often referred to as the district's lone "year-round school," has been operating on a balanced calendar since 1999.

"We've transitioned from using the 'year-round' vocabulary because many parents, teachers and kids get confused by that term and because we are not talking about going to school 365 days," said Superintendent **Eric Lieske**. "That is not what this particular calendar is about. It is still 180 days—the same number students now attend—but with a smaller summer vacation and periodic breaks throughout the year where families can choose to take vacations, stay home or seek additional types of academic opportunities."

While the discussion began at the beginning of the school year about possibly moving Central Elementary to a balanced year calendar once renovations are completed, the focus widened to a district-wide effort following input from parents at several focus meetings and results from the annual Parent Satisfaction Survey. In the survey, given each November, the majority of parents agreed when asked the question: *"I feel the district should consider implementing the balanced school calendar (similar to the Hill Elementary calendar) at more school buildings."* While nearly 60 percent agreed, many more indicated in their comments that they would support the balanced calendar school year only if it was implemented district-wide.

"What we found, overwhelmingly, was that parents reported they wanted the whole district to go to a balanced calendar, which makes sense because if

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The mission of the Davison Community Schools is to develop individuals who demonstrate skills necessary for lifelong success in a changing, global society.



Board Briefs

Board Briefs is a monthly newsletter published after Board of Education meetings. For additional information, please contact the Communications Department at 591-0852.

School Administrators Week in Davison

Board of Education members approved a resolution recognizing March 3-7, 2014, as School Administrators Week in Davison.

Board accepts donations

Thank you to the following:

- **Dr. Kenneth Vobach, Patti Engineering and Dick DuCharme** generously donated \$1,000, \$500 and \$500, respectively, to the DHS First Robotics Team 3534 House of Cards. The money was used to compete in the FRC Aerial Assist Game.
- **Meijer of Davison** donated a \$200 gift card to Room 4 at Thomson Elementary on behalf of a nomination by parent Rachel Maxwell. The gift card will be used to purchase classroom supplies.
- **Community Foundation of Greater Flint** donated \$612.92 from the Justin M. Jury Fund and the Jim and Lynn Peters Fund to the ACES student mentoring program.

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you have kids in a different school building, they are on different schedules,” Lieske said. “I believe our constituents, our parents, have really spoken loud and clear and if we believe that this is something we think is good for kids, it’s something we need to be looking at district wide.”

While there are several advantages to a balanced year school calendar, the main benefit is a proven reduction of summer learning loss.

“If a student isn’t doing math or reading exercises, it’s just like going to the gym; if you don’t do it regularly, you lose your stamina and achievement levels,” said Lieske.

The Hill calendar includes 45 days of school followed by five days off where students have the option of staying at home or attending an intersession. This model naturally aligns with athletic and extracurricular activities. For example, sports seasons normally end within intersession periods. In addition, many fall athletes have already started their seasons and even played games before the school year has even started.

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Superintendent Eric Lieske

Of course, there are also challenges to implementing a balanced calendar district wide.

“The biggest one is financial,” Lieske said. While the majority of staff would still be working their normal 180 days, some additional employees, including teachers, food service, bus drivers, etc., would be needed to work during week-long intersessions held three times throughout the school year, or a total of 15 additional days. At Hill, about 35 percent of students typically participate in intersessions.

Another financial consideration would be the installation of air conditioning in all school buildings. School officials believe that a VRF (variable refrigerant flow) heating and cooling system, similar to the HVAC technology that is being installed at Central Elementary and currently in place at Davison Middle School, can be installed in the three remaining elementary buildings (Gates, Siple and Thomson) needing climate control with sinking fund dollars by the summer of 2016.

“I think we’ve known for many years that (implementing the balanced year calendar) is one of the logical things to do now that we have proof of it in our own district, but the holdup has always been the buildings because they’re not climate controlled,” said Board Secretary **Karen Conover**. “The (VRF systems) are more reasonable to install and it now makes it feasible to do this. I don’t think anyone has ever doubted that long summers are counterproductive to teaching and learning.”

Lieske said there is much more work to do, including communicating the possibility of moving to a district balanced calendar to staff, parents and the community.

It may also take some time to seek approval from the Michigan Department of Education to recognize the 45/5-day balanced year schedule as a bona fide “year-round” school. Currently, the state recognizes calendars that are 45/15-day or 60/30-day calendars that have less than six weeks of summer break or operate contingent with a college or university schedule exempt from the law requiring districts to begin school after Labor Day. Since Hill Elementary was operating prior to the Labor Day law, its calendar has been “grandfathered” in and allowed to continue operating on its 45/5-day calendar.

“Unfortunately, neither of those types (the 45/15 or 60/30) of calendars meet the needs of our community,” Lieske said.

Lieske, however, has been in contact with State Superintendent Michael Flanagan to discuss the possibility of having the 45/5-day balanced calendar recognized so the district can proceed with implementation. Lieske has been invited by the state to share his input about flexibility of options in determining a balanced calendar year approach.

Currently, Beecher Schools is the only district in the state of Michigan that operates on a bona fide year-round calendar.



Leading the Pledge

Students from the Davison Middle School's Student Council, accompanied by Teacher and Sponsor Tisha Torres and Principal Shelly Fenner-Krasny led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance at Monday night's Board of Education meeting.