

August start creates more quality instructional time

Beginning a week earlier in August creates more quality instructional time and has a significantly positive impact on student learning, superintendent Jonathan Phipps believes.

“Everything research says about increasing student performance shows that the more quality time students spend on learning, the more they achieve both in the classroom and on standardized tests,” Phipps said.

“Starting so that we can finish first semester before the winter holidays definitely improves the quality of our instructional time, and it gives us two more weeks of instruction before students face state testing. We’re convinced that we’ll see many instructional benefits from an earlier August start date.”

If school for students began the second week of August, it would allow students to complete first semester before the winter holidays. The last day of school is during the fourth week of May, which is a negative impact on student performance and behavior.

The district sees the following benefits of beginning the second week of August.

Benefit 1— Beginning the second week of August means students complete two more weeks of their studies before they face standardized testing such as the PASS, AP exams and the SAT. The extra time improves student achievement at all grade levels.

Benefit 2— All students need to go home for winter break aware of final grades for the first semester and ready to come back for a fresh start. Also, finishing before the winter break gives schools more time to determine which students are failing, notify their parents and if necessary,

arrange the help students need second semester so they can be promoted or graduated.

Benefit 3— Instruction is more difficult at the end of May and in early June because of “spring fever,” so finishing the third week of May provides more quality instructional time.

Benefit 4— Completing the semester before the winter break is academically sound for students because of the continuity of coursework, followed immediately by final exams.

Benefit 5— Getting out the third week of May allows summer schools for students to end before the July 4 holiday.

Benefit 6— It is logical to allow winter break to separate the two semesters.

Benefit 7— Finishing courses before winter break eliminates time now used to review and start back after winter break. Students and teachers don’t have to start “twice” after the holidays—once after the holidays and once after the new semester.

Benefit 8— The schedule acclimates high school students to the post-secondary schedules they will face.

Benefit 9— Workdays for teachers are easier to set without breaking up the school schedule after winter break.

Benefit 10— Getting out the third week of May allows the district summer institute for teachers to be held before college summer sessions begin and before most traditional vacation times including Memorial Day. The training teachers receive in the institute directly benefits students.