

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES  
OF  
CLAY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

A Special Session of the Clay Community Schools Board of Trustees was held at the Central Administrative Office, 1013 S. Forest Avenue, Brazil, IN 47834, on Wednesday, January 30, 2013. Tom Reberger, Rob Miller, Kevin Kumpf, Fred Froderman, Jennifer Kaelber, Ron Scherb and Amy Burke Adams were present.

**I. Call to Order**

The special session meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Superintendent Kimberly Tucker.

**II. Discussion of Balanced Calendar for 2013-2014**

The meeting was conducted for the purpose of allowing patrons to express opinions regarding the proposed school calendars for 2013-2014. The next regular session board meeting will be held on February 14, at which time a decision for the calendar will be on the agenda.

Comments from patrons and school personnel in support of a balanced calendar:

- For Option 2, one week off in the fall would be better than just one day because it would allow parents to schedule something without their kids missing days of school. For spring break, business owners would be better able to accommodate employee vacation requests if there were two weeks off.
- For those who work on a rotating shift, the balanced calendar would work well and offer more flexibility in vacation scheduling.
- Research has shown that a shorter time off in the summer results in children not losing as much. Comments from those in other corporations that have adopted a balanced calendar for more than one year have indicated that the students did not lose as much with the shorter summer.
- The Y offers child care during the breaks. However, that may not benefit everyone.
- For students taking AP classes in high school, the longer breaks would be beneficial.
- The seven-period day will be in effect for high school students starting this fall, and some kind of break at the end of each nine-week grading period would be helpful for students at the high school level.
- Noting that there may never be a time when the board knows exactly that a calendar is going to work, one patron encouraged the board to “get it done”.

Comments from patrons and school personnel in opposition to a balanced calendar:

- In a family where both parents are required to work and do not have much vacation time and where the mother does not have the opportunity to be home with her children during the summer, the balanced calendar would mean more time for the mother to be away from her children due to work demands when the

children are on break. Also, finding additional day care doesn't work out for this patron's family. This patron also had a problem with the two-week spring break.

- A concern was voiced regarding children whose parents really don't care about them and what those children would do during two weeks of spring break. Also, this patron expressed concern about how children would be fed for those additional weeks of break without the school lunches, where they would go and who would take care of them.
- A concern was voiced regarding a two-week break prior to the ISTEP+ test and potential loss of learning during those two weeks.
- Having extended breaks during the school year does not prepare students for the real working world environment.
- For those who work in Vigo County but live in Clay County, the traditional calendar where spring break for Clay County does not coincide with spring break for Vigo County is beneficial.
- Two weeks at spring break for which to find short-term daycare was described as "impossible", especially for those who live in small towns with limited daycare options.
- It is more difficult for younger children to get back "in the swing of things" after a break.
- A concern was voiced about why a balanced calendar would be implemented for the following school year when there are so many concerns and red flags.

Suggestions from patrons and school personnel for changes to the proposed calendar:

- Break up two weeks at spring break and extend the break in the fall.

Comments from school board members:

- Ron Scherb
  - ◇ He suggested that the word should be "tweak". He despises that word because to him "tweak" means correcting mistakes; however, he had talked to two principals and they had indicated to him that the proposed calendar needed to be tweaked.
  - ◇ Mr. Scherb referred to the original balanced calendar concept which would have been nine weeks of school, two weeks of break, nine weeks of school, two weeks of break, nine weeks of school, two weeks of break, nine weeks of school. He pointed out that on the proposed calendar, spring break would come in the eleventh week, not at the end of the grading period. Superintendent Tucker explained that the break was dictated by the I-READ testing for third grade students, which may or may not continue.
  - ◇ Mr. Scherb does not like the idea of starting school on August 1. He asserted that he had 17 objections to the balanced calendar proposal.
  - ◇ He suggested working on the problems in the balanced calendar option for a year before implementing it.
  - ◇ He has a concern about the two teachers he has talked to who would have to choose between missing the first day of school because their

children would be involved in the State Fair or sending their children to the State Fair alone.

- ◇ He complimented Kim Tucker and Tim Rayle for having the public discussion of this issue.
- Jennifer Kaelber
  - ◇ There is not going to be any single scenario that is absolutely going to make 100% of every person in Clay County happy. The board just has to make the best decision it can.
  - ◇ Every survey that she has looked at from students in support of the balanced calendar has had a comment about the breaks.
- Amy Burke Adams
  - ◇ Mrs. Adams pointed out that, no matter which calendar is adopted, it is going to be a work in progress. Problems that are found can be fixed the following year. She is striving for a schedule that best fits Clay Community Schools.
  - ◇ She also pointed out that when concerns were voiced over teachers who would have to make a choice between missing either the first day of school or going with their child to the State Fair, Option 3 was created. She stressed that this was a process, and no one is trying to cut anyone out or put one group's needs over the other.
- Rob Miller
  - ◇ Those who have talked to Mr. Miller have been for the traditional calendar. He noted that there are many considerations, and he asked that the public bear with the board as they decide what is in the best interest of the kids as a whole. Mr. Miller referred to the comment from a patron regarding students who would not get meals during breaks, and he described that as a social issue. He added that at this point in time it is not the school corporation's job to be their parent. He acknowledged that it was going to be a tough decision and he has not made up his mind yet.
- Tom Reberger
  - ◇ He does not believe anyone is saying that any of the three calendars is bad. However, he believes that if a show of hands had been made tonight, there wouldn't be a majority for any one of the three. As he sees it, the board has to come up with what is best for the kids, no matter how that's accomplished. He believes there are good and bad points with each. He also believes there might be a consensus that patrons want parent/teacher conferences. The questions that Mr. Reberger believes need to be answered by the board: 1) When to start; 2) How to wrap things up at Christmas for the first semester; 3) Whether or not to have a spring break, and if there is a spring break, how long it should be. He hopes to come up with something that everyone can at least tolerate. He

has not made up his mind and needs to think about it more. He wants to hear what people have to say.

Regarding the surveys that had been conducted, the tally of the ballots that were to be mailed to the school board president has not been completed. The ballots are still coming in. At this time, Mrs. Kaelber had tallied 305 and she still has a stack of envelopes with more at central office to be picked up. She had seen a comment on a ballot regarding the lack of daycare in Clay City. Other comments have shown the week in the fall has been a big positive. As for the two weeks for spring break, Mrs. Kaelber pointed out that people would take a vacation when it works best for them regardless of when a break is planned. She has seen a lot of the same comments.

Superintendent Tucker noted that the last week of March had historically been the week of spring break for Clay Community Schools and she suggested that the second week of spring break should be considered for snow make-up days in order to keep the last week of March as the set-in-stone spring break.

In response to Mr. Scherb's comment that the day off in the fall was for the Covered Bridge Festival, Superintendent Tucker stated that the one-day break in the fall was a staff development day and would probably be going away. She added that the calendar was something that used to be negotiated as part of the bargaining agreement. Teachers have five days separate from the 180-day school year, and there has not been a complete consensus about how those days will be delivered. It is felt that the day in October and the day in the spring are not productive, so those days may be added to the beginning and the end of the school year when professional development can be focused at that time. Those days would therefore not be in the traditional calendar for 2013-2014.

Mr. Scherb also asked about parent/teacher conferences not being on the traditional calendar. He asserted that parents want the parent/teacher conferences, with which patrons in attendance agreed. As to why parent/teacher conferences are not included in the traditional calendar, Superintendent Tucker explained that the parent/teacher conferences were discontinued when the former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett and a previous state legislature decided that half days could not count as part of the 180 days of instruction. The elimination of the parent/teacher conferences was not a decision of Clay Community Schools. A way to build those back in would be to take additional days out of the summer and have parent/teacher conferences in conjunction with a fall break on the balanced calendar option.

After Mr. Scherb asserted that Owen County had adopted a balanced calendar that would begin on August 16 and questioned why Clay County's proposal had to start on August 1, Superintendent Tucker commented that a true balanced calendar has the equal amount of break time between quarters. The proposed calendar for Clay Community Schools simply added a few extra days in the fall and spring intended to give periods of break and rest time to allow students and staff to regroup in between longer grading periods and testing. It is not a traditional balanced calendar. She

questioned Spencer Owen's ability to start on August 16 with a balanced calendar, noting that grading periods had to be balanced. For the proposed Clay Community Schools balanced calendar, the second semester is a little longer to allow for a considerable amount of ISTEP+ testing and ECA testing going on predominantly in the spring. Superintendent Tucker would still like to look at forty-five day grading periods with school ending when most parents want their kids to be out of school, which is the end of May. She theorized that the school year could go further into June with a later start time in August; however, there might be parents opposed to that as well.

To the patron who shared that she did not care if the school year went into June in order to work in parent/teacher conferences and suggested that teachers might have to go to a student's home if the parent was not able to go to the school for a conference, Superintendent Tucker responded by noting that the school corporation had a contractual agreement with teachers. She added that elementary teachers are very supportive of the parent/teacher conferences and have totally regretted that the conferences were taken out of the school corporation's prerogative to have within the 180-day school year and were deemed not important by the Department of Education. As for why parent/teacher conferences could not be held on an evening, Superintendent Tucker explained that, even though the school corporation relies on a teacher's good professionalism and favor to come back and contribute to night activities, due to the contractual agreement with teachers the school corporation cannot mandate that teachers come back in the evening unless flex time is allowed during the school day.

In response to an additional patron comment regarding potential loss of learning during the longer breaks in the fall and spring, Superintendent Tucker noted that the kind of learning the school corporation wants to take place is learning that is retained on the basis of being conceptual, ingrained, and used and is relevant, authentic learning. If it is rote memorization, then there probably would be a need to refresh after an extended break, but not necessarily after a week or two.

Remarks were made by the president of the 4-H council. He pointed out that this was a big issue for the kids, and even though the school corporation allows excused absences, it comes back to the fact it is the first day of school. He appreciated the board and school corporation looking at other options for that. He has talked to teachers who are also parents and has heard from others who have those same concerns. As a parent, he and his wife are very concerned about their children who are involved in sports in both the fall and spring. He also expressed his concern about the students involved in the band program and the fact that a fall break would occur during October, which is in the middle of the band's competition season. In response to these comments, Superintendent Tucker stated that there had been conversations with band personnel and coaches. She believes there has to be some flexibility. As for practices, if the students are not in school, they can conduct practices during the day rather than during the evening. Also, one of the band directors had indicated that it would give the band kids who are taking higher-level courses a breather so that they can be more focused during the competition season.

Mrs. Kathy Knust, Curriculum and Grants Coordinator, stated that she appreciated everyone who was here tonight and the opinions that were expressed. However, she noted that 71% of the respondents to the online survey supported the balanced calendar. She asserted that the decision for the board would be an easy one if the direction of the people were followed.

A patron asked if the online survey results would be combined with the paper survey results. Superintendent Tucker replied that the results of the online survey had already been disaggregated. At the last board meeting, it was determined to do a survey in a paper/pencil format and Option 3 was added. Patrons could still go to the web site and see the three choices, but there was also an opportunity for anyone to print and send in the survey. That way, the process could still be done anonymously and it would ensure that it was out of the hands of administration and into the hands of board members. Mrs. Kaelber will disaggregate those ballots, which for the most part are being sent in sealed envelopes. Superintendent Tucker stated that it is not possible to do a compilation because one was intended to get input on the balanced calendar and the other offered an opportunity to comment on three distinct calendars. She was very pleased to have received over 300 paper responses to this point. The paper survey responses need to be received by February 8. The patron commented that she had completed the online survey in the fall and did not realize that she would need to also respond to the second survey. Mrs. Adams clarified that the first survey only presented the traditional and the balanced calendar as options with 71% choosing the balanced calendar. The second survey is asking which balanced calendar of two options would be preferred. Another patron asked what the school board would consider the majority if 40% chose the traditional calendar, 30% chose one of the balanced calendar options and 30% chose the other balanced calendar option. He pointed out that in that scenario when the two balanced calendar percentages are combined, it would show 60% want the balanced calendar rather than the traditional calendar.

Another patron asked if the parent/teacher conferences could be restored regardless of what decision is made about the calendar. He deemed those to be really important from a parent's point of view. Mrs. Adams pointed out that a conference could be scheduled with a teacher at any time, if desired. A problem the patron pointed out was that a teacher has the option to say yes, go ahead or no, I don't have the time. Superintendent Tucker agreed that the school corporation would like to add this back in as well; however, if it takes two days to get all of the conferences scheduled, that time off must be given to teachers because they cannot be responsible for students during conference time.

### **III. Adjournment**

Having exhausted all agenda items, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

The meeting was audio recorded and copies may be requested by contacting the Central Administration Office.