

December School Council Meeting

AGENDA: 2012/13 school calendar proposals from Palliser.

Dale Backlin presented four calendars for the district to consider adopting. The 'alternative' version was presented to the Calgary 'faith' based schools for consideration.

Don Zech attended this special school council meeting that was called for December 7th, 6:00- 6:45 pm to discuss the proposed 2012-13 calendar.

Derrick and Don shared the thinking and rationale behind the four calendars. i.e. how the day is structured, appropriate recess, lunch breaks, start times, end times, busing considerations, & programming options for schools such as video conferencing.

The current proposal from Palliser suggests that we have 6 division wide PD days with all Palliser schools that would occur on Friday's: (changed from Mondays) Sept. 21, Nov. 9, Dec. 14, Feb. 1, Mar. 15, & April 19
As well as 4 GCA on site PD days to occur on:
Aug 31 (prior to students starting), Oct 5, Jan 31 & May 17

GCA would maintain its 2 weeks break at Christmas and Easter break as well as the 2 (ACSI & ATA) teacher's conventions (one in Oct and one in Feb). Students would also be returning to school after the Labor Day weekend. Last day before Christmas break would Dec. 21 [full day]

All suggestions & proposals for the 'Alternative' calendar will be sent to Palliser at the January council meeting on Jan 9.

Suggestions:

- Have only 4 division wide PD days instead of 6 and make the PD days longer hours for the day (9-3 instead of the proposed 9-1). Make full use of the PD days as teachers are already travelling to Vulcan for the day.
- Move two of the GCA on-site PD days to create better breaks for our families as well as have them at a more beneficial time throughout the school year for GCA teachers to implement new ideas and strategies.
- Changes would make the PD days as follows:
 - o Sept 21 – Vulcan PD day /no change
 - o Oct 5 – move to earlier in the year to Aug 28, the PAT analysis results are available, it would be better for teachers to discuss and have all the intervention, implementation strategies ready to go on first day of school. GCA did this for the 2011-12 school year. Very beneficial.
 - o Nov 9 - Vulcan PD day / (4 day weekend for Remembrance Day)
 - o Dec 14 - proposing to cancel this 5th div wide PD day and make it a regular full school day.

- Jan 7 (move Jan 31 as GCA does not have a semester break at the end of January)
- Feb 1 - proposing to cancel this 6th div wide PD day and make it a regular school day.
- Feb 19, 20 no classes (creating a full week off for students but not teachers)
- Mar 15 - Vulcan PD day /no change
- Apr 19 – Vulcan PD day /no change
- May 17 – On site PD day/no change
- June 14 – planning/organization move to Wed Feb 20.
- Half day of classes, first day and last day, Sept. 4 & June 27.
-

Other points to note:

- GCA lunches are 55 minutes long (51 minutes for 2011-12). All other Palliser schools have between 30 – 50 minutes for lunch.
- Elementary has a 15 minutes recess in the morning
- Elementary currently has no afternoon recess due to our long lunch recess plus our PE classes are after lunch.
- Junior high will have a two minutes break through the day between all classes. Since the older kids tend to ‘need’ more food throughout the day, the two minutes break will allow for this need.
- School start time would change for next year
- K-5 8:40am – 3:20 pm
- 6-9 8:30am – 3:20 pm

There were some comments, questions and suggestions made by parents in attendance at the meeting and any additional comments can be sent to Derrick regarding the calendar. Some items are decided by Alberta Education and cannot be changed by any school, such as ending early in June as the PAT and diploma exams are scheduled until June 27 or convention dates etc.

Please see the additional comments below, email your thoughts and attend the school council meeting on Jan. 9 to discuss the calendar further before it is given to Palliser for approval.

Parent Questions/Comments:

- Can we do PD via video conferences rather than missing 6 days of school?
- Is there a way to see the results of the division wide PD days directly impacting the classrooms and how will this be shared?
- Two days are required at near the end of June for school closing procedures (this would be Feb 20 and June 28) with GCA recommendations
- we want more days in school for our kids

- Don Zech– PD days are important and our teachers are great. We want to make sure our teachers are getting professional growth.
- Can Palliser allow flexibility in the ‘alternative’ calendar proposal?
- Brant Christian – for example, do not have school on Fridays so how would the new proposed Friday division wide PD days affect their teachers?
- What feedback from parents is Palliser wanting and to what extent?
- Palliser needs to know what is going on in schools and is trying to manage all 26 of their schools which is why creating more common calendar is required.
- Jan. Palliser Trustees board meeting will approve the calendars
- PAT are being pushed back by Alberta Ed which is why the late dates in June
- Is it going to be mandated that all schools are going to be the same calendar?
- Will the Feb break disrupt the learning the same as this fall break. (it is shorter than our fall break of this year and students would have had 3 days off that week due to convention and Family day)
- Parents had liked the fall break.
- Earlier start time (8:40) for elementary was decided by the principal based on hallway/entry observations and parent feedback. Having staggered start times will also help with the parking lot.
- Christmas break will match public board with one week overlap for Spring break
- No comment on whether or not they all have to match or if we will have some personalization between schools within Palliser. i.e. Not all the Calgary Alternative schools take part of the ACSI convention in October.
- Does GCA have to attend all 6 common PD days or can we only go to 4?
- There are so many variables to try and make it work- Palliser is trying....
- Friday PD is fantastic! Instead of Monday and Tuesdays.

Principal summary:

- Parent teacher conferences: Wednesday Nov 28: 4 – 8 pm, Thursday Nov 29: 10 – 6 pm, & Student led conferences/Showcase of learning(big success this year): Wed Oct 17: 6 -8 pm, Fri Nov. 30 – in lieu of (6 hours on 17th & 28th)
- Although Friday June 28 is a planning/organization day, the principal would like to consider having the traditional year end award’s ceremony on Friday from 9 – noon, Parents and students in gr 6 -9 will attend and teachers ‘invited’ to? It would make more sense to have the awards on the last day versus having it on Thursday 28th from noon to 3 pm. Giving the JH teachers Thursday afternoon to finish the reporting/marks would make more sense. Don Zech mentioned that the two planning days must be at the end of the school year or ‘near’ the end. In GCA’s case we would like to move June 14th to Feb 20. Defining ‘near’ the end depends on what definition of ‘near’ means.
- We typically have ‘meet the teacher” nights on the first day and the second day of school: Tue Sept. 4 (K & 1) and Wed Sept. (Gr 2 -9)... 7 -9 pm. Our parents liked having both events at the start of school so all parents could put a face to their child’s teacher.

- With GCA's proposed changes to the Alternative calendar, Gr 1 – 5 will have 971.5 hours and Gr 6- 9 will have 994 hours. Also GCA will have 20 non-instructional days with 174 instructional days.
- 14% of GCA students are bussed.