



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

TO: District 97 Board of Education

FROM: Ushma Shah, Superintendent

SUBJECT: Recommended SY25 School Calendar

DATE: **Revised February 1, 2024**

Background

Illinois Public Act 101-0012, which took effect on July 1, 2019, must be incorporated into the SY25 calendar. There has been a discrepancy between the ISBE requirement and the current structure of the district calendar since 2019. The discrepancy involves District 97's previous coding of days and implementation of Family Teacher Conferences (FTC). To ensure compliance going forward, we have been in communication with the Illinois State Board of Education as well as with the West40 Regional Office of Education.

Administration became aware of this issue in mid-December 2023. Seeking a collaborative resolution, we began meeting regularly with representatives from the Oak Park Teachers Association (OPTA) immediately upon returning from winter break. In January 2024, OPTA leaders and administrators have met on seven occasions¹ to outline the calendar discrepancy and to engage with OPTA leaders in team solution-seeking. Several of these meetings have also been attended by legal counsel: Matt Hanser for OPTA/ Illinois Education Association (IEA) and Phil Gerner for the Board.

To date, these meetings have taken place in a spirit of listening and revising our thinking. Meetings with the OPTA have also demonstrated the forward-thinking leaders we have

¹ Collaboration meeting dates between OPTA & administration to resolve the calendar discrepancy:

Wednesday, January 10, 2024*

Thursday, January 11, 2024

Wednesday, January 17, 2024*

Thursday, January 18, 2024

Wednesday, January 24, 2024*

Thursday, January 25, 2024

Saturday, January 27, 2024

*denotes IEA and/or district legal counsel participation in the meeting



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around the table. Through our collaborative discussions, there has been a shared commitment between OPTA leaders and administration to ensure working D97 families have access to time with their child's teachers. With our equity policy as a guide, we are stretching ourselves beyond our traditional stances to build real bridges between theory and practice and between values and actions.

Key Proposed Changes

The [recommended SY25 calendar](#) includes two changes of note:

1. Family Teacher Conferences

CHANGE: Students will attend a full day of school on the Thursday of conference week. Conferences will be offered that evening from 3:00pm to 7:00pm at elementary schools and from 4:00pm to 8:00pm at middle schools. The following Friday, students will not be in attendance and conferences will be offered from 8:00am -12pm at the elementary schools and from 9:00am to 1:00pm at middle schools.

CONTEXT: Our agreement between the OPTA and the Board reflects a universal commitment to the connection between teachers and families. This is evident in the following clause in Article VIII of our agreement::

"Parents must be offered a fall and winter conference. In the event parents are unable to meet during the scheduled conference times, teachers and parents will agree on an alternative conference."

2. April 1 Election/Institute Day.

CHANGE: April 1 will be an Institute Day.

CONTEXT: A draft SY25 calendar was initially presented at the November 2023 D97 Board of Education (BoE) Business Meeting. At that time, the BoE raised a concern regarding schools being open for student attendance on the April 1, 2025 election day. Administration followed up with the Village of Oak Park and Cook County Clerk's Office to request that D97 schools not be used as a polling place on this day especially due to



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the fact that a non-student attendance day on April 1, 2025 will mean that students return from spring break for one day only to be off the next. On December 8, 2023, we were informed by the Cook County Clerk's Office that this request could not be granted and that we should be prepared for all 10 school sites to be used as polling places on April 1, 2025. Based on this information, the SY25 school calendar includes April 1, 2025, as an Institute Day.

Next steps

The recommended calendar will be included on the February 13, 2024 Board of Education agenda for action; a memorandum of understanding (MOU) reflecting this plan for SY25 will be signed with the OPTA. We will continue to collaborate with the OPTA to support a collaborative approach to partnering with families in a manner that generates positive relationships and universal student success.